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THE

GUARDIAN ANGEL.

A

POEM IN THREE BOOKS.

BY

JAMES SCOTT, D.D.,

LATE PASTOR OF THE FIRST REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH,
NEWARK, N. J.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

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TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF ARGYLE:

THE LORD RECTOR OF MY ALMA MATER:

AN AUTHOR,

AND THE FRIEND OF AUTHORS:

THE BRITISH EDITION

OF MY POEM OF

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

THE AUTHOR.

New York, U. S., 1858.

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PREFACE.

My object in this poem of the Guardian Angel, has been to illustrate the ministry of the holy angels as taught in the Sacred Scriptures:—especially in the following passages:

Heb. i. 14.—The angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Psalm xci. 11.—"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Rev. i. 1.—"He sent, and signified it by his angel."

The poem consists of a series of conversations concerning the invisible state; the existence and ministry of holy angels, as well as their guardianship over man, held by persons who met accidentally at different places, connected by a slender thread of story. I have made use of "the dream" as a poetic device, keeping in mind that several of the most glorious revelations made to man by God were made in dreams.

From my own experience, I am convinced that the human mind is always pleased with the beautiful and the sublime scenes of the natural world. Who was ever tired by looking at an overflowing fountain or at a waterfall?

As many of the thoughts contained in the poem occupied my mind, while beholding the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers, Niagara Falls, and Calton Hill, Edinburgh, I was led, on subsequent reflection, to make them the grand scenic centres of it. Nor is it possible to give poetic interest to a didactic poem, without episodes on the beautiful and the sublime in the visible universe.

As the spirit of minstrelsy moved me from time to time, thought after thought arose in my mind, and line united mysteriously with line, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, when God's Spirit breathed on them, until the poem of the Guardian Angel became a living presence of beauty to me, as a creation of my intellect and heart, for I found it in the depths of my own nature; I cannot forget it, nor entertain the thought of blotting it out of existence without painful emotions.

I am met again by another trial: it is the anxiety I feel on determining to unveil the virgin face of my poetic child to the gaze and scrutiny of eyes less partial than my own. Like a father giving away his beloved

daughter at the nuptial altar, who doubts, fears, hopes, and prays for her destiny, I too tremble for the future history of my poem of the Guardian Angel. I have nothing to say concerning the poem as a work of art.

Dear reader, as the traveller who finds some relic of the olden time, intrinsically of little value, among the ruins of an ivy-mantled cathedral, deposits it for preservation in a museum, so do I commit this poem of the Guardian Angel to my generation for safe keeping. If one human mind from its perusal shall obtain clearer, nobler, and more comforting views, concerning the angelic ministry and *God's solicitude* for man, I shall not have written it in vain. In the language of Abraham's prayer for his son Ishmael—"May it live."

J. S.

POEM.

The Poem seeketh to elucidate
The doctrine of the holy angels, chief
Their ministry to man.
'Twas but a germ
Born of the sleepless spirit, a stray thought,
Which lighted on my soul like some lone bird
Upon the neighboring tree. Nor can I tell
How it did take its present form: long years
It has been growing on my soul, from that
Sad thought. As years rolled on a presence grew,
An angel's presence, passing beautiful
Before my mind, which, neither day nor night,
I could forget. I loved that presence, aye,
As loves the lover only. Always the theme
Of angels pleasured me: in childhood's years
Angelic history charmed me.
Through the years,
As I elaborated in my inner mind
The lay of the Guardian Angel, I have gone
For imagery far and near, to build
It to its present size. With the urns of thought

Set up, all o'er the rounded universe,
I took me freedom. Meditation walked
With me into the works of Nature, where
The Poet's eye adores the beautiful;
And carried me away, where I could hear
The voices of those unseen presences
Which minister to the enraptured soul.
I brought me offerings from every land
Of thought, as broidery for the lay: nor is't
Yet worthy of the theme that gave it birth.

E'en as it is, a humble niche my heart
Would seek for it in the galleries of Earth.
I cannot blot it out of being now—
It clingeth to my memory, as moss
Clings to the old wall, and the elfin flower
Clings to the ruined shrine: nor bury it
Without an agony, no more than sire
His first-born child. It is not vanity
That leadeth me to send it forth to the world,
But love inborn. Perchance along the path
Toilsome and straight, up to the gate of Heaven,
Some weary wayfarer may find his toils
Lightened by what it teaches. May it be so!

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

BOOK FIRST.

The world invisible, the visible
Surpasses far in population. There
The spirits of earth's myriads, sleeping dead
Have habitations, and the hierarchies,
The ancient settlers of the universe.

Among that multitude of beings, one
Resplendent as the evening star uprisen
On the hill tops of earth, shines. Seraphim
To him are ministering, and at his side
Conspicuous, bright, his guardian angel stands.
Whether enthroned, or travelling alone
Heaven's crystal river down, or holding league
With souls and angels, his great peers, an air
Of thought invests him, thought serene and grand

And godlike. Spirits whisper, as they gaze,
And say, what grandeur in his looks ! The thought
Which fills that noble soul, is not of God
Alone, and the great hidden mysteries ;
But also of the earth, the ruined star
Of man. Nor rosy morn, nor dewy eve
E'er harness up their chariots, the green earth
To visit, but he likewise hies him out
Unto the battlements of bliss, with none
But his bright Guardian Angel at his side,
To see the one-mooned world.
Intensely clear
His memories of earth. His grave is there—
There was his natal spot, its woods, its wilds,
Its mountain battlements, its cataracts,
Its vales, its vasty seas, are garnered up
In his soul's sacred chambers, like the wealth
Of palace treasured pictures, fresh and fair,
As when he dwelt among them. Strong the spell,
The witchery of youthful love inthrals
Him still, 'tis part of his soul's being. Souls
Upborne to sinless habitations, bear
Their memories with them. Angels, as they mount
From earth with tidings, halt on their ascent

Beholding him, and tell if aught they know
Of her, he loved and left a-sorrowing,
When he upsoared for angel-countries, far
Beyond the margin of Time's ocean strand.

Dulcet to me his memory is, as tones
Pealed from cathedral organs, at the close
Of day. Like the o'ertopping pine, his form
Was tall, his mien all nobleness and grace.
The aspect of his countenance as grand
As carved or painted beauty, rarely seen
Among the living. Out of his pale face
Ofttimes a seraph looked. In musing moods,
And e'en in hours of joyance, he was wont
To fall a musing, parted stood his lips
As portals oped for eloquence. But what
Is beauty in the human face, but lines
More exquisitely carved, or colors tinct
On clay, by God's own fingers? Small the worth
Of outward beauty, for the brilliant tints
Fade from the living dust. Deep in the mind
Is beauty shrined, and o'er the universe
Its hues are poured like light, whene'er the soul
Is moved to pleasure. 'Tis the spirit unseen

That beautifies the mortal form. The tent,
Which fire-winged angels lodge in, is lit up
By their celestial presence, and gleams out
Illumined, to the midnight traveller.
Thus doth the soul the man irradiate,
And o'er him hang a veil of lustrous light,
Betokening what dwells the home within.

Sublime the clusters were of thought divine,
Which grew upon that soul erewhile on earth,
As the luxuriant foliage of young oaks.
At times, methought he teemed with centuries ripe
With wisdom ; then o'erflowed, as some full urn
With water, clear and living from the rock ;
But oftener, like the firmament, when all
The stars are riding in their chariots brave,
As angels voyaging, and pouring down
Their beams in golden glory, on the hills
And vales of earth ; for aye the beauty clear
Of his mind filled the universe, and flowed
Through all its veins. If he but spoke of hill,
Or tree, or stream, or feeling of the heart ;
At once a halo of new light arose
And brooded there. He sowed his thoughts around,

As God sowed erst the teeming worlds, that morn
Of creation. Once, as if his soul
Were a vast ocean roused to wrath, where ebbed
And flowed o'erswollen streams of thought, he looked.
Ideas grand, colossal, like the towers
Of ancient worlds, dwelt in his mighty soul.
At other times, most suddenly across
His face swept shadows, as if sorrows preyed
Upon his heart. Anon his eyes would blaze,
Like meteors clear and soft and bright, as if
He heard the voices of young hope and love
Consoling him, from out their holy shrines.
He was a mystery to me, and oft
I feared, when watching his enraptured moods
Of feeling, that his soul straightway would scale
Its prison walls. A shell the body is
Where spirit nestles, nay the globe itself
Is but a nest, from which innumerous souls
Their everlasting flight have taken.
Man
Is the Son of God,—His Scion, like to God
In his diviner nature, but finite.
On that side viewed all sensuous he seems;
On this, all intellect with naught of sense.

From loftier stand his moral nature looms
Before us, conscience rising like a tower.
From height sublimer yet, he seems all faith,
With ear intent on gathering every word,
Which droppeth from the lips of God. The soul
Of man is many-sided, of great powers,
And destiny more grand than angel hath,
Or being yet create. Sublime is man!

O'er the Atlantic sea, he journeyed far
At manhood's dawn, far from his island home
To the western world. In thought ofttime, he strayed
A pilgrim homeward, loitered on its strand
And climbed its heathery hills, for deep enshrined
In 's heart it lay, where'er he wandered, bright
And precious as a gem, which love preserves
Locked in a casket. Of her orators,
Philosophers and poets much he loved
To ponder. Caves and glens and mountain tops
Which gave her martyrs shelter, of old time,
He knew and treasured. Every battle field
His memory recalled, and when he told
Their glories, he revived the patriot dead,

Arrayed the mind before, with coronets crowned
Of freedom. Full of minstrelsy, as harp,
Waking to poet's fingers, was his soul.
And strange his lore, for one so young. The founts
Philosophy had oped in the vast world
Of mind, were not concealed from him—of yore
Nigh these he worshipped. Nor with living seers
Had not held living converse ; for his isle
Of deepest, soundest thinkers was the field :
And he had nursed his generous youth e'en then,
Where thought profound, and deep, and clear, and pure,
Most reverence hath of men. The poet's tongue,
The oratorial thunders he had heard,
The men whose fame surrounds the globe, whose tombs
Votaries fail not to visit ere they die.
In the vast shrine of worthies, consecrate
To genius, in his native isle, a niche,
A vacant niche, there is and yet will be,
Until his statue fills it and his name.

This faintest sketch by inapt pencil drawn
May yet suffice, if it shall find a place,

A lodgment in the heart of living men,
Now on the earth, and to some youth unborn,
Far down a future age, a study be.
Among imperishable names may his
And Isabel's be found—immortal is
The memory of his guardian angel; all
My word-craft seeks is this. Most fit it is
To sketch the lineaments of him, distinct,
And full and lifelike, so the mind may see
His presence, like a thing of life; for 'tis
His thoughts, which form the staple of my lay.
His early history, though all replete
With substance and adapt for song, I pass
Untold, nor sound his fortunes, until first
The star of love on his horizon rose,
Blessed star to him.

It found him, sure Heaven-sent.
In the bright morn of life, when all the earth
Is white with blossoms, and the sky
Of future years is cloudless, only seen
By lovers. Till that hour he knew not earth
Had being so divine, so beautiful;
So much like those beheld in holy dreams,
When the entranced soul looks through the sky

Up to the sinless beings there. His hour
Of love had come, eventful hour of life
On earth ; the mystic hour, which never comes
To man but once. He loved ; great is that word,
And weighty with innumerous memories
Of joy and hope and sorrow ; meanings which
No orator hath spoken, and no bard
Hath sung. A wider, vaster universe
Was oped to him, and the new shrine of love
Wooed him to worship—shrine of youthful love
Shall never lack its numerous worshippers.

Hard by the Mississippi's waters dwelt
The maid create for him ; for there is not
In all the realms of being one lone soul
Unmated, all things are twofold in their lives.
Spirits are made in pairs, and happiest aye,
That spirit which hath found its twin-born mate.
That blessed mate he found for him, foremade,
In the recesses of the wilderness.
The solitudes of earth are beautiful,
Sentient and full of presences divine,
Investing the earth-born, who dwell therein
With heavenly bloom and dignity. In such

Was born this angel of his destiny
And cradled there. Child of the wilderness
Was she, and grew in beauty, like the morn
In unseen skies, or flower in secret glen,
Where no rude eye intrudes. All things most fair
And holiest in nature, noiseless weave
Their threads of being. Angels visit earth
In silence, retreat silent, as the dreams
Of sleepers. Thought makes pilgrimages wide,
Silent through universal space ; and light,
Next swiftest, journeys silent. Trees,
The huge cathedral trees, which the sweet birds
At eventide made vocal with their glee,
Branch, spray, and leaf, and all their odorous blooms,
Glad of their dewy baptism, silent grow.
On earth there is no sound when souls are born
To God. In silence awful and profound,
Spirits he cleanseth black, engrained in sin.
The wheel of Providence, so high and vast,
So laden with the destiny of worlds,
Rolls ever onward, silent and unheard.
What wonder then, that child of beauty grew
To womanhood, amid the wilderness,
Unconscious, till they met. But when they met,

Each knew his mate, and earth diviner seemed
To both, and life more holy from that hour.
Each blossom has its destiny ; she was
The only flower of time, which grew on earth
For him.

Words are the lifeless images
Of outward things ; the history of love
They never can unfold, nor faithful paint
The witchery of beauty. Pictured words
Breathe not, nor live. A sorcery there is,
A sorcery in love and loveliness,
Which none may know, save they who feel their power.
By day and night, aye, in the lover's mind,
Absent or present, dwells her image. Life
No pleasure has, so sweet as waking dreams
Of love. The most puissant mystery
Of earth it is, that youthful souls sublime,
With every virtue crowned, should instantly
Halt, on the road of life and bow the knee
To other human souls, once seen, nor seen,
Nor heard of, till that hour. The woods among
He saw her first, most beautiful to him
In her wild youth—his inmost soul awoke

To feeling and to joy, such as before
Naught had awakened in't.

The trees are fair
At summertide, when sultry days serene
Lie motionless on earth and sea and sky.
The light is passing fair, when after night
Of pain, the sunbeams gild the weary couch.
Fair laughs the earth, when the black storm is past,
And the loud flapping of its wings no more
Resound. The hills are beautiful at night,
When all the burning stars do stand agaze
From altitudes cerulean and vast:
But all this beauty only is, to die.
Trees, light, earth, storm, hills, stars, insentient all.
Must perish. Not so human beauty, seen
By eyes of love. Decay comes never nigh
"With its effacing fingers"—death itself
Mars not its memory; and such was hers
To him, who loved her. She the beam of light
Created to illume the darkened shrine
Of his existence. Earth must have her moon,
To light her through the pathless fields of air,
And man his star to light him up to Heaven.

The Mississippi is the central stream
Of the vast western continent, in twain
From the great northern lakes dividing it,
Down to the balmy Gulf of Mexico.
On green and terraced bluff, of alpine swell,
The orient overlooking, to the north,
Some twice two hundred miles above the mouth
Of the Missouri, was the childhood's home
Of Isabelle the fair.

He floated down
The Mississippi, in his bark canoe,
One star-lit autumn eve; a lamp shone out
High up the western banks, which stirred his soul,
As if a spirit spake, with memories
Of other lands. Perchance he musing heard
His ministering angel's voice, for God
To every man his angel gives, who ne'er
Leaves him alone. Soon, on the river's banks
He stood; then to a willow half submerged
Moored his canoe, and clombed the winding way
Up to the lighted mansion; entering it;
No more aimless to roam on earth; for there
He found his father's friend, a patriot
Self exiled from fair France; and here his fate

Found him, which gave sublimity and bliss
To all his after life. Young Isabelle
Became his heart's sole star. In all his dreams
He saw her, and in every revery
He talked with her. His mystery of life
Was there—he loved, he won fair Isabelle.

Three summers since, in flowery month o' May,
His home by the Atlantic sea, where aye aside,
From pilgrimages through the land, he turned,
Farewell he bade, nor e'er again saw it.
The day of his espousals hastened on,
Filling the future, like a jubilee ;
And through the chambers of his soul, the sounds
Of its approaching wheels resounded. On
That morn his friend—the bard, whose numbers seek
To waft his history far down the stream
Of years, his sole companion was.
The bay
Studded with argosies, on commerce bent :
The vast metropolis, all hushed and still
As a sepulchral world, though sleepers dreamed,
And sick and dying in their agonies
Breathed heavy ; with white vapors covered were.

It seemed as if the robes of morning trailed
On earth. We left the city ere the beams
Of day perched on the towers like birds of heaven.
The streets were all deserted, and the steps
Of wassailers were not e'en heard. None stirred,
Save traveller all intent on pilgrimage.

All day, all night we hasted on our way ;
And as the second morn came out of heaven
Greeting the earth, the Alleghanies stood
Before us, wrapped in mist, like seers,
All veiled and hid from vulgar eyes. Anon,
As day drew near, their lofty summits shone
Like the golden battlements of far off worlds.
The live-long day these mountain barriers
We clomb ; nor saw we aught in gorge, or glen,
Or waterfall, or precipice, so fit
For meditation as the giant trees,
Innumerous, lying in lone dignity,
Dead monarchs. Side by side they stately lay
In rows, like tombed corpses in the crypt
Of hoar cathedrals. It was sad to think
No resurrection morn would them invest
With life and foliage.

Sailing adown
The broad Ohio, us the fourth day found.
Serene it was, and beautiful that day—
As beautiful as when who saw it first
Named it "la Belle Rivière,"—the river showed.
Its banks, its forests, and its ample vales
All green with life and populous with herds,
Embosomed in the circling hills, come back,
Full oft in dreams to me, far distant. High,
Remote, the azure, dome-like sky appeared;
Illumed and glorious with the summer sun,
Where islands of white clouds slow floated through,
Like fleets of hierarchs pleasure voyaging.
The winds lay sleeping on the far off peaks
Of mountains dimly seen. Silence profound,
Like some great presence, listening amid
The fane of Nature, stood invisible.
Thrice day sun-lit, and thrice the starry night,
The white moon walking midst the golden stars,
Like inmate of the sky gone forth alone
To meditate, did wax and wane while thus
We sailed. Nor once a shadow fell on us,
O'er which the soul could brood as ominous.
Not fairer may the heaven of heavens appear,

When sinless angels walk its holy streets,
Of God communing.
Needs must I pass by
Unsung, the sounding rivers, which came forth
To greet us on our journey. Urns of thought
I leave, thick standing there untouched; of eld
Lit up by spirits of the wilderness,
And consecrated unto minstrelsy,
While earth's young harp was green. O scenes on scenes,
Fresher than youthful memories and fair
As the tall tree of life, I pass ye by
With grief.
Absorbed, I gazing watched the eve
Of the eighth day, silent, the western gate
Of the horizon ope. The blazing sun
Had disappeared amid the forest. Sky,
Earth, woods, and river instantly were dyed
In crimson glory. On my soul, thoughts strange
And new came flocking, like the birds of day
Into the leafy groves, purpling the scene
With angel presences most beautiful.
Enough is told, my revery broke off—
For then a hand me touched—an earnest tongue

Whispered—"The Mississippi," and was mute.

It was my friend—though looking towards the West.
Mine eye had not observed where they two met—
The sire of waters and his lovely bride.
But now I saw the Mississippi sweep
Silent and strong towards the sunny South,
Bending the thousand-miled Ohio, like
An osier twig, and carrying it away,
As ancient conqueror his captive queen,
Bound to his chariot. As the stream of time,
With all its myriad wrecks of bygone worlds,
Is poured into Eternity's vast sea
And ceases, so Ohio was not—here
Her history endeth.

In the purple West,
Beyond the Mississippi's swollen flood,
Missouri's shores, with long drawn ranks arrayed
Of giant sentinels, in verdure clad,
Lay sleeping in the slant and misty lights
Filling the forest-gaps, its source unseen.
Far to the westward set the golden sun,
While builded by his magic, in the East,
High overhead the sevenfold arch uprose

In iridescent lustre, beautiful,
Bridging the azure with its curve sublime ;
As if ten thousand cars might roll across,
Freighted with angels, nor its span depress.
Beneath o'erthwarted by that glory, rolled
In the soft light Ohio's lovely stream :
While southward, underneath, not distant far,
I saw the Mississippi sweeping by,
As sometime through an arch of olden time
Triumphal, in the sweet Italian night,
The traveller sees the slow procession pass
Of southern constellations burning clear.
That scene is graven on my soul. The floods,
The crimson halo, the o'erarching bow,
Stand aye before mine eyes in present light,
Upcalled by memory's retrospective spell,
And with themselves upcalling all the train
Of thoughts which passed before me musing then.
How wonderful must be the sinless world
Around the great white throne ; how more than
grand
The soul of God, when all that I beheld
Was naught, beside His glory unrevealed
To mortals ; and how unconceived the bliss

Of holiest angels conversant with scenes
Fairer than this, through all the years of time.

My friend had stood impatient as I gazed
In tranced silence. When at length he spake
Abrupt, I started ; for his sudden speech
Seemed purposeless ; his words at random thrown,
Wide from the mark.—" Dost thou believe," he said,
" Dreams are of God to us, as erst they were
To the old patriarchs who in Haran dwelt ;
Of import real, inspiration true ;
Or things as unsubstantial as yon bow
Built out of rain and sunbeams ? "

To him thus
I answered. " Dreams are twofold in their kind ;
Some issuing from the soul like streamlets clear
From the deep hills ; or lights from out the urns
Of Time ; or trees umbrageous, green and tall,
Born of the valley. In the mystery
Of the soul's essence deep their causes lie,
Their origin beyond all mortal ken
Far hidden. Some but fleeting vagaries
Fantastic by the senses formed, which rise
Like vapors from the stagnant pool, when high

The sun uprisen scatters his warm rays
O'er fen and upland. Others again
There are, which pass the mind's broad disc, as fleets
Pass o'er the circle of the optic glass,
Far out at sea, by angels builded on
The banks of their great heavenly river, dreams
Magnificent as orient palaces—
Life dramas all, all launched by angels too,
And steered unseen, in silence, swift as light,
Before the sleeping senses.

"Dreams there are,
There have been, and shall be, whose sweep is vast,
Far reaching in the infinite, deep concealed.
In these 'tis thought by many that the soul
Makes visits to far distant worlds, while sleep
Locks all the body's senses up, and ere
The gates are oped returns again. Such thought
Is grand, befitting the large dignity
Of the angelic soul. Its angel goes,
Its guardian angel with it goes, in these
Vast pilgrimages. Far away a land
There is, where aye the future and the past
Are seen, called Dreamland—there it goes. The soul

For briefest instant standing on those hills,
Or travelling through those vales hath memories
Innumerable traced on it, which rise
Like scenery before it in its walks
Anon and musings on the earth. Such dreams
Are revelations taken from the urn
Beneath the everlasting throne."

To this

He said—"I had a vision this last night,
In which I saw the scenery we now see;
Only the setting sun, the earth, and sky,
Were more divinely glorious. Other things
Were shown to me, not now beheld, which gave
The dream mysterious interest to my soul.
I dreamed that I was travelling alone
I' the land of visions; now, on mountain tops
I stood, where I beheld the battlements
Of Heaven, and heard distinct the music rise
And fall, like ocean billows on the ears
Of pilgrim travelling near its surgy roar;—
Then, seemed to walk through valleys white with tents
Of seraphim; where aye at every turn
I met their heavenly inmates; and they made

Obeisance. Then, again, it seemed as if
I paused amid a wilderness, and gazed
On cataracts of alpine grandeur. Aye
I felt myself borne on through varying scenes,
Like an unbodied soul.

"As wayfarer,
When passing through an earthly palace, halts
Sudden before some gallery's vaulted door,
Awed by the presences seen there, along
The canvassed walls and in the niches ; so
Paused I amid the dream, entranced and awed
By the grand scene before me :—'twas this scene
Now spread before us, but more beautiful,
With something of the invisible world beside,
As now the West like a pavilion glowed,
Pitched for the great archangel. As I gazed,
Methought I heard at intervals, far up
Amid the gorges of the crimson clouds,
The voices of young earth-born travellers
To travellers shouting higher up ; and felt
The presences of spirits ministering
Unto me—nay, the spirit hand of one
Thrilled me.

"But here a change came over me,

And all that memory has preserved is this:
I sat alone in a canoe, borne down
The current of the broad Ohio. Mute
As rivers in the realms of death, was all
Above, around; naught heard I, but my thoughts
Fast rushing through the halls of mine own soul.
Most suddenly a rainbow noiseless dropped
On earth from out the firmament; a grand,
Aerial structure beautiful uphung,
Like the angelic bridges o'er the sea
Of life—an arch of clear and gorgeous light,
It spanned the Ohio river. Downward still
Borne on, I neared it, and I saw distinct
An angel stand midway its vaporous curve;
A giant angel; on his head a crown
Of wondrous glory gleamed; afar
Behind him trailed his robe; and o'er the arch
Floating, was stirred by the night-wind. Anon,
I thought the angel beckoned me and spake,
But incomplete, as dreams forever are.
His words mine ear caught not. Perchance the waves
That plashed around my course, likelier yet,
My mortal ears, by sin sealed to the tones

Of holy angel's voice, those words divine
From mine enraptured soul shut out. Anon,
In fearful effort those angelic words
Striving to grasp, I started, I awoke."
"How hard," he said, "thus frustrate to awake
And ineffectual, when a moment's space
Spared to the vision more, had given to him
The words seraphic."
"Sorrow not," I said
To him, "for certes, soon again will come
That messenger, if aught the message be, as ships
By sudden storm blown from the shores they coast,
Out to broad ocean, after many days
Arriving safe when winds are down; so dreams
Pass and come back again; nor doubt I, this
Shall bring the guardian spirit again, who left
His errand half unfinished."
Here I paused,
For up the Mississippi now had turned
Our vessel. Mute, upon the rushing prow,
The crew stood gazing at the vasty flood,
Which seethed and muttered hurrying past, as
though
Instinct with some great life. Innumerous

Were the images which came before my mind
By which to measure it—this most we took,
A maniac prophet fleeing from the face
Of God, seeking some unknown world. The gates
Of day down-dropped, and all now visible
Of that most gorgeous sunset, was a gleam
Of golden light above the distant tops
Of the dim forest trees, like to the trail
Of angels on their road to Heaven.

The chariots of the night arrived on Earth,
Bearing the round white moon and silver stars
Their riders. On the horizon, from her car
Of glory landed that fair queen, and poured
Celestial radiance from her heavenly urn,
O'er forest, flood, and field. Her aspect looked
As that of heavenly priestess, at the shrine
Of nature. The tall forest trees appeared,
Like Druids stationed in the wilderness
To worship God. The firmament of blue,
When the enkindled stars sat on their thrones,
Showed like a city on a mountain's steep,
Seen by the traveller from the vale below
At night, with all its avenues and squares

And monuments illumed. What sight of Earth
Could be more gorgeous than a night like this?

A passing cloud, a vagrant of the sky,
An instant hid the moon, and o'er the scene
A long, blue shadow flung. At this my friend
Bespoke mine ear and said, "'Twere well to sit
Us down; the place—the hour—the memories
Recalled are fit for high discourse."
Anear the prow
We sat us down, where observation swept
Far up the Mississippi. Still the cloud
Threw its dim drapery over all the scene.
Alone we sat, nor long in silence sat;
For albeit soon,—"I doubt not, I indeed,
That dreams are given of God, and give, themselves,
Enlargement to the wide domain of thought.
Still why it thus should be, or whence the need,
I see less clear. Man's sensuous essence fits
His nature to converse with all the world,
Yet more his puissant mind. The Holy Ghost
And Revelation's truth pour on his soul
All light essential else. Perchance the dream
Is the soul's Eden-birthright, still possessed

By it. If dreams were needful, then, to man,
More needful in his exile."
Answering him—
In thought I led him back to the primal morn
Of Earth, and to man's fall. "The Earth," I said,
"When man was made, was nearer God than now.
It lay at anchor in the bay of Heaven,
As new rigged ship, moored in an inland sea
Of Earth. The shadow of the battlements
Of the vast sinless land fell over it—
This silver orb of time. From its green hills
The great white throne and mystic bow were seen;
Heard, too, the minstrelsy at morn and eve,
Of harping angels. Numberless amid
The groves of Paradise walked cherubim
And tongues and peoples. All obeisance made
To man whene'er they met him. If desire
Of travel e'er had then possessed the mind
Of man, he could have passed unwrecked and safe
In frailest shallop through the channels there,
And seas replete with worlds; as earthly bays
Are with fair isles. In nightly dreams man saw
Worlds now unknown, and visions had of things
Future and grand.

"Change direful came o'er man
And earth, apostate. Angels then, sent down
In haste towed off the erring Earth, far off,
Into the wilds of space, where far and few
The stars are visible by night; by day
One lonely sun. Like plague-ship on a rock,
A desert rock fast anchored, it was left:
God's interdict waved like a banner high
Above its rocky battlements; and round
Its sea-girt shores angelic beings walked
Forbidding travel there, from sinless worlds;
Save to God's special envoys.

"Forfeiture
Most sad was this to man, apostate man.
Angels no more might with him parley hold:
No more be seen by, save when sent down
From Heaven, on special errand from the throne.
No more might angel footprints mark the earth;
No more might sinless minstrelsy the ear
Of man regale: no more might angel tents
Be visible to man: no more the wings
Of his own soul unfurl, and from the Earth
Go out exploring other stars. Egress
From Earth to man was barred, forever barred,

Save by the mystic spirit-ship of death.
Of all his former state, naught was there left,
Naught but the privilege of dreams divine ;
Which, haply, if collected from a life,
And in one tome, apart, enshrined,
Were almost revelation."

Here, paused I :
The vessel veered, and the unclouded moon
Disclosed four listeners sitting, of our words
Observant—these unseen erewhile. A boy
Fairhaired was one, an orphan, in one day
Bereft of both, when most he missed their care,
His parents—while the summer's raging star
Smote the red rivers of that deadly clime
With pestilential flame. When both were gone,
Another boy, scarce older, clung to him
Of sable hue, a slave. Around the child
His arm was folded : on his faithful breast
The orphan head was pillowed. I have seen,
Oft in my dreams, since that eventful night,
The orphan and his slave. Even then, methought,
That servile forehead did contain a soul
Not servile.

Four in number there they sat

The listeners :—one a venerable man
Tall and white haired, with patriarchal flow
Of reverend locks : and as the moonbeams fell
In floods of lustrous glory o'er his face,
As if from quenchless urn outpoured, I felt
The oratory of his eye. He sat
One side of the orphan boy.
Upon the right
Of the boy-slave reclined a woman, old
Exceedingly, in robes of widowhood.
Her large blue eyes shone radiant with the light
Of deathless thought ; her feature clear and fair
As sculpture. Spirit of statuary ! where
Was then thy chisel, that thou didst not give
That group to future times !
Amid the pause,
The woman's words fell on mine ear distinct :
"Seeing of dreams you speak," she said, "and
things
Spiritual and divine, no wrong it were,
I ween, to hear and question. Pardon me,
If I offend, who would not ; but your words
Have touched my heart, that I must speak ; for
naught

Doubt I, but angels stoop, at times, to hear ;
And spiritual beings hold their watch,
In ministering to the exiled souls of earth,
Inspiring dreams, which future deeds may oft
Foreshadow, and teach truths of life divine."

Albert her words drank in, into the depths
Of his large soul. He bent him forward, while
She spoke. The Ethiop and the orphan looked
Inquiringly into her face, with eyes
Like stars of love, at eve, before the moon
Arises ; and a curious witchery
Crept over me at every word she said.
Nor can I tell why it were so, unless
The music of her voice some chord awoke
Of secret sympathy.

At length, assured
Her words gave no offence, then on she spoke
What in her mind was upmost ; how her Lord
When he was dying, on his painful bed,
When life was well nigh ended, and perchance
A something of the future dawn was nigh,
Dreamed, and, what time he woke, divulged his dream,

Mystic and wonderful.

"In thought absorbed,
Beside his couch by night I sat, alone.
He slept; when sudden up he rose, awake,
Like one who dreams, when touched by human hand."

Thus prefaced she the story of his dream.

"'Saw ye mine angel, or his footsteps heard
Near by?—the sound of wings, of angel wings,
Has waked me from a vision. Still, I hear
The whisper of angelic messengers,
As if they ministered to me, in sleep.
Audience methought an angel sought of me.
He looked some far-off traveller, ofttimes seen
On hill of earth, at early morn, whose robe
Of mist trails far behind. I instant knew,
And felt it was a spirit of glory, sent
On secret errand from the throne of God.
The angel had the visage of a man;
But taller than a mortal form his mien.
The crown upon his head was not of earth,
The harp not earthly, which his left hand bore.
But ere his utterance reached my wondering ear,
I heard the footsteps of my fluttering thoughts

Descending and ascending through my soul,
Like echoes of a falling tree.
Ere long,
Smiling ineffable peace, the angel spoke.
Elect one, peace, fear not, thy servitor
Ordained am I of old, thine angel guide,
In the Lamb's book thy name is writ :
Writ in God's autograph, ere angels yet
Had being, or the compasses of God
Had mapped the confines of the universe.
Hoary Eternity thy name elect
Holds graven on its everlasting walls.
The dial, which all things predestinate
Announces, points even now to thy death-hour.
He, who for sinners with the Father pleads—
The advocate—closes his argument
For thee. Complete in holiness thy soul.
For thee the Holy Spirit brooding sits.
A mystery in a temple ; and well pleased
The Father. Lifted by the hand divine
Of thy great proxy, hath the fragrance sweet,
From the full censer of thy prayers, gone up,
Blent with the increase of his sacrifice,
Unto the Father's nostrils, high in heaven.

A crown, a harp of holiest make, a throne
Await thy entrance to the land of souls.
Hearest thou that sound?—It is the pendulum
Of ancient time, its oscillations slow
Beating. Thou canst not hear it, mortal yet
Imperfect—nor canst see the mystic thread
Uniting thee to all the holy forms
Enthroned and glorified. It vibrates fast,
As they on tiptoe watch thy advent grand
Into their realms. Soon shalt thou see the court
Of courts, sublime beyond all pomp of earth.
On earth great multitudes of angels stand,
Awaiting thy departure from the shores
Of time. No soul elect from earth departs
In the death-ship alone, or through the vale
Of terror walks, without great retinue,
Surpassing princely coronation trains.
What would the sinless hierarchies of God
Declare, if they beheld one holy soul
Of angel guides bereft, in that dark hour
Of strange transition, walking lonely home,
To its new dwelling in eternity?'

"No more said he, but with outspreading wings

Of wondrous beauty, sailed away and soared,
As eagle from a sea o'erhanging cliff,
Into the empyrean. In the dream
I followed him, as I were winged too.
The moon we passed, and many a star, when night,
The night of earth had sat enthroned in pomp
Surpassing day. We passed the wheel-like sun,
As he lit up the far horizon's steep
With rays. We saw the battlements sublime
Of the vast universe, unseen before.
Huge amphitheatre-like cliffs, which gird
An archipelago with isles besprent.
Dense crowded on these ramparts of clear light,
Rank above rank, sworded and helmed with fire,
Thicker than cedars on the holy hill
Of Lebanon, angelic legions stood.
On, on we flew, the headlands we passed by,
Creation's utmost limit, and went out
Beyond the worlds, beyond the spheres of time,
Into the airless waste of barren space,
And there, hung balanced in the breathless void,
Gazing, a desolation limitless
On all sides round us.

"Then the angel spoke

'Earthborn,' he said, 'behold the ship of death
Riding the billows of eternity,
With her great freight of souls.'

"I looked abroad
And saw a huge cathedral craft, her hulk
All stripped, withouten masts, withouten sails,
In silence toiling through the pitchy gloom.
At times, strange wailings from her ribs of woe
Rose tremulous to the ear, at times arose
Jubilant shouts of triumph.

"Here the dream
Was changed. Methought a child I was, alone
On earth. 'Twas summer, beautiful to see
Were the white blossoms on the hedgerow trees
By the woodside. Balmy the air and blue
The sky serene, with here and there a mass
Of clouds whiter than hills of snow. The road
I took was mountainous, and rich in wealth
Of glens and streams, and woods and waterfalls,
And lakelets forest-girt. Anon, a group
Appeared of angels coming down the way,
Who formed an avenue through which to pass
Onward and upward. Silent all they stood,
And made obeisance my steps before,

As the steep road I clomb with childish glee
Alone. Nor long until another group
Drew nigh, and formed themselves in rows, and stood
On either side ; like sentinels they stood,
While I fared forward. More and more they came,
The angel travellers, thickening on the way.
The mountain road up to its highest gorge,
Cleft through the hills eternal, narrower grew,
And steeper. Nor could I forbear the thought
That I was near the land of angels, near
Some city, whence their hosts forth issuing came.
Still went I on, until I reached at last
What seemed the summit of that Alpine road,
And paused awhile to look around, and drink
Into my heart the scenery sublime.
Then what a wonder blazed upon my soul
Astonished !—all the mountain gorge below,
Which weary I had thridded to this height,
Stood solid with one countless, shining mass
Of angels coming up. Host after host
They came. Above, great patriarchal trees
O'er all the boundless champaign flourished fair,
Upon the blessed mountain's top. The road

Through this wide meadow lawn showed great array
With gonfanons, and banners, sounds of harps
And symphony of psalteries and song,
Approaching.—First, my Guardian Angel came.
Joyful he grasped my hand, and in my ear
This secret whispered."

Here, she stopped and wept.
With choking voice, scarce audible, so stirred
With grief, then added—"Death was waiting, nor
Would wait one moment longer. Ere he told
That mystery sublime, the other world
Received his soul, and I was there alone,
Alone beside my dead."

The orphan boy
No longer could his agony of soul
Contain; but loudly on his mother called,
Like some lorn child, when wandered from its home
And stopped by passing stranger. To his heart
Closer the Ethiop clasped the boy—his tears
Wiped off, and with kind words assuaged his woe.
To change his trains of thought to channels free
From sorrow, quietly I took his hand
In mine, and asked if he had ever dreamed
Of angels? Instantly his eyes shone out

Like meteors bright and beautiful and full
Of joyful thought, and answering, well pleased
To tell his thoughts, spoke thus in childish phrase.

"The night dear mother died, from troubled dream
They waked me. In the dream I thought one came
To me and talked about my mother. Wings
Had he, like albatross or eagle, such
As I have seen upon the rocky cliffs
Of ocean, in the distant land beloved,
Home of my boyhood.—Pointing to the sea,
He showed me where a galley rode the waves
Steered by angelic hands—'That bark,' he said,
'Bears thy dear mother's sainted soul away
Beyond the shores of time.'—I cried for her
To take me with her, and awoke to find
Her dying.

"Pallid was her face, and bright
With an unearthly light her eyes. Her hands
Were very cold. I feel their coldness still
Upon my forehead; and the words she spoke
To me, forever shall I hear, as though
They could not fly away from earth and me.
With grief o'ercome I soon again returned

Into the land of dreams. I seemed at home
And in my little chamber, on my couch
At midnight. Through the window I could see
A little star a-twinkling in the sky
Brightly. The young moon looked upon the star
As if she loved it more than other stars
Around it. Soon I thought I saw that star
Come nearer and more near to me. It looked
In at the window, and I thought I called
To it, and said, O little twinkling star,
Come in. At this methought the star was changed
Into a bird, and instantly began
To sing more sweet than any little bird
I ever heard amid the grove. When once
The serenade was o'er, I thought it flew
Into my room, and oh how beautiful
It was. It turned into an angel, like
My mother, and then hovered o'er my couch,
Still growing liker and more like, until
It was my own dear mother. Beautiful
Her wings and mantle seemed. More close she drew
And stood beside my bed, and fondly looked
Into my face, and spread her pinions bright

Around me, and soft whispered in mine ear—
I tried to hear, but woke in trying."
Then
He wept aloud, at thinking how he woke
His mother's words unheard.
"Good messengers
Are ever on the wing, between the earth
And highest heaven," the old man said, and bent
Him forward to embrace the orphan boy.
This, too, he added—"Nor is it a thing
Incredible, fair boy, thy mother's soul
To thee was ministering amid the dream.
Faster than thought can travel, travelleth
The disembodied soul from earth to heaven;
And from the spirit realms again to earth.
Most fit it were she should revisit thee,
What time her duties at the great white throne
Gave leisure."
Now 'twas near the noon of night,
For fast the moonlight hours had floated by
Amid the reminiscences of dreams
Foreshadowing the future—the unknown.
As shining day and dusky night both met
I' the vale, so looked the orphan and his slave,

While they arose and stood—as light and shade
Moving across the summer plain, so, they
Before us, sobbing.

"Sorrow not," I said,
"Ye orphans, for most fitting night is this,
For souls translated to eternity
Earth to revisit, and most fit for dreams
Dewy with inspiration."

From his seat
The aged man arose. Tall was his form
And awe-inspiring, like a seer of earth,
Whose inner life is full of holiness,
Keeping communion ever with his God.
Full in the moonlight standeth he, e'en now,
For memory never perishes, but keeps
Her thoughts with miser care, deep in the cells
Of the fixed soul. As statue on whose brow
Immortal thoughts are graven, so he stood,
Then spake these words, solemn as oracles
Of old revealing mysteries profound ;—
We listened, I and Albert, for we two
Alone remained.

"Causes have holiest dreams
Which dreamers little know. Angels must needs

Be the scene-shifters, for no hand of flesh
Could build up architecture so divine
And beautiful ; nor from futurity
Lead up the shadowy skeletons of things
To be ; nor ope the gateway of the world,
Where God's old purposes have lain concealed
From first eternity. The dreams this night
Revealed to us have sequels, nor is it
A thing to question, but soon some kindling ray
From passing angel's torch, may fall on earth
And lighten up their meaning.

"Evermore,
The future and the past appear in dreams,
Looming like headlands seen far out at sea
By mariners. Nay, passing strange it is,
That scenes remote in childhood's years return
And are reacted ; and that beings which
No mortal eye hath seen, should sudden rise
From out the womb of dread eternity,
And flit before the dreamer. But 'tis so.
Divine and mystical are dreams, God's gifts
To erring man, nor given to man alone,
But e'en to cradled infants, and the years
Of growing childhood, each to each adapt.

What mother hath not sighed to know the thought
Which stirred her sleeping infant's soul serene,
As o'er its face, like twilight o'er the sea,
Gleamed the sweet smile, and from its lips of love
Laughter came rippling out, as if its ear
Heard whispers of angelic voices nigh.
The closest dungeon, secret as the grave,
Barreth not out the dream of light, of love,
Of blessedness, and death alone has power
To bid the march of nightly visions cease.

All things are God's—all dreams—all waking thoughts—
Beings angelic, mortals in their flesh,
Souls in their immortality, all His,
And Death and Life, Eternity and Time;
This night is His, an episode not lost
In the great poem of His Providence.
Oft have I thought that dreams to man are sent,
To warn the soul of its departure near.
Nor were it strange, if we should learn anon,
The ship of death were voyaging hard by
This very night."

Not silent long remained

Albert, but answered—"Dream-worlds thick as
stars
In the blue sky there are, in winter nights,
Which souls must visit, and strange converse hold
With spirit-beings, so that passing out
Of earth into Eternity, some thought
Of the future may possess them, and make fit
For higher and diviner mysteries.
It may be that the dreams, they dreamed alive,
Borne with them through the narrow gates of death,
Become deep truths to the unbodied souls,
Which stand awaiting on the strand of time,
Like ship unlaunched.

"Vast is the soul enlarged,
Vaster than planet, star, or moon, or sun.
They cannot think—not so the soul. Nay, more,
They in the lapse of time must cease to shine,
To traverse the great firmament, no more
Needed to light the skies—but not the soul;
It never can return, nor in the womb
Of dark oblivion be entombed and hid.
It must exist forever, whether saved
Or lost—its essence has no end. The term
Of its abiding on the earth, the day

Of grace, of overtures, of working here
Below, must end, all end. Nor endless e'en
The joy of angels over rescued souls
New born to bliss. But to the soul itself,
In itself infinite, no end shall be.
Death is but sleep's twin brother, nor long time
Ere all of us shall converse hold with death
Intimate and familiar, as in sleep
With our accustomed dreams, which still supply,
On fit occasions, with fit help the soul.
These are its towers of observation, these
Its Pisgah realms, where oft it walks inspired,
And learns the awful future. Even to me
Have dreams great warning given of events
Whose tops no eye hath seen.

One dream I had
Long years ago, or ere my beard had grown,
Or I had thought to roam beyond the sea.
Nor change of place, nor change of scenery,
Nor wildest change of thought has from my mind
That dream erased. I thought that I was dead,
And buried in the hills beside a brook,
Which evermore made music, as it flowed
Close to my bed, and still methought, I grieved,

In the still grave, with deep regretful pain
That I had died, or e'er I found to build
The mighty purpose of my heart. For I,
I too, a purpose had, through all my youth.
Touched, if enkindled not, by fire divine,
"To build the lofty rhyme,"—and strike the harp,
Which many a stranger hand had struck before :
The harp of Scotia, which even then gave out
Sublimest strains, that wondering nations loud
Applauded. But nor Scott's enchanted lay
Of way-worn minstrels and beleagured dames,
And those who wept the flower of Yarrow's stream,
'All wede away,' and deathless Bannockburn,
And fatal Flodden ; nor the bard who sang
'The lost Kilmenie, pure as pure might be ;'
Nor Motherwell's sad minstrelsy, instinct
With simple Scottish pathos ; nor his lyre,
Which sounded the dread plague scene ; nor who sang
The Baltic and the North, and that weird fray,
Where Munich's banners waved at dead of night,
Arrayed by torch and trumpet, nor the flow
'Of Iser rolling rapidly.' My soul
Detained as higher themes, which gave their sound

To less sonorous strings, and with their flame
In genius less sublime kindled, for me
Greater sublimity. His muse who sang
'The Course of Time,' still warbled in mine ear,
And lured me with the gesture of white hands,
Waving me forward—till my heart was filled
With that sole hope, to build one monument
Of holy song, which might survive, not "brass
Nor the famed capital," but this poor clay
Which gave it birth and being, and ensure
Something unto his glory; and that done,
To lay me down and die—but in my dream
I died, or ere I reached that only goal
Of that my one ambition. Nor, perchance,
Is't wonderful that, since I dreamed that dream,
I feel as one foredoomed too soon to die,
My self-allotted task undone, my life
Purposeless, and my death as bare of fruit
As my life hath been.

Troubled is my soul
With this night's history of dreams; nor yet
Do I fear to die!—so, if death meets me, ere
I have achieved my earth scheme, be it mine
To yield it up to one whose sojourning

On earth exceeds mine own, to finish it."

I answer made : " This night an epoch strange
Will be, in all our memories. The dreams
Will haunt us evermore, and fairer make
Our earth state. Beautiful, more beautiful
Than erst will be our future. Brighter forms
Will seem to walk with us along the track
Of time, and cheer us on our journey home
To our great Father's halls. 'Tis wonderful,
That on the mystery of God-sent dreams,
Such unexpected dazzling light should fall.
Ascribe not to blind chance such meeting. God
The sower is, and reaper of the seed,
And fruitage of all history. Unroll
The map of nations where we choose, and then
An armless hand is seen the helm to guide
Of earth. The starry worlds, heaven's ships of fire,
Not aimless drift athwart the firmament,
But voyage on to shores foredoomed to them,
Since the creation. God our teacher is
This night upon the Mississippi."

Here
We parted, soft sleep like a mantle fell

Ere long enfolding me, and with the sleep
Dreams came uncalled. The narrow streets of earth
Were ne'er more thronged with multitudes, than was
The sleep of that one night with dreams. Not all
Can I recall, nor give them utterance.
Some I remember, angels beautiful
With all were blent—their faces and their words
My memory for aye will haunt.

One claims
A passing tribute in my lay: I seemed
Slowly to climb a high sequestered hill
Of earth, for in the dream I found myself
Upborne to verdurous mountain-tops, and stood
As pilgrim stands, who waits before the gate
Of some imperial palace, half concealed
With foliage dense. While thus I stood there came
A shining angel unto me and said:
"Hail, brother, hail! thrice happy I to see
Thy face. I heard thou wast upon the earth,
And from my course have turned to visit thee,
For ever since creation's cold, gray dawn,
A pilgrim have I been, wandering alone
Beyond the frontiers of existence, where
The pendulum of time I could not hear,

Counting its oscillations, have I gone ;
Worlds e'en no hierarch yet hath visited ;
And things beheld, none see till they have dwelt
Long ages in eternity : yet earth—
Thy star I never saw till now, nor thee.
Yet well I know that this is earth, the orb
Of wondrous destinies. Thee, too, I know.
Reflected in my memory hath been
Thy face since first God gave me being, clear
And beautiful as in the limpid pool,
The forms o'erhanging it. By angel's hand
Limned, I saw it in the gallery
Of God, where hang the pictures of all earth's
Innumerous generations. Mysteries
Thou wilt not know, for ages link my fate
With thine."

As some great thought will sudden flash
Before the mind, and disappear as fast,
Ere yet the soul arouses to the sense
Of its great presence, so this angel came
And passed away.

He scarce departed, came
A second angel and saluted me.
Tall as a fiery column, and as clear

Revealed was he. He bowed again, but not
To me, and spake. I knew, but knew not how I knew—
His words unto my Guardian Angel, near,
Though all unseen, and unsuspect by me,
Were spoken ; greeting, such as spirits have,
They had, not having met since I arose
On earth, fresh from creation's teeming lap.
Erewhile together they had journeyed ; seen
Strange wonders in the distant universe,
Not oft explored by angels ; embassies
Of mighty import had fulfilled, and dwelt
Of old together :—this I heard them tell.

Swifter than light that angel on his way
Passed and was gone. Before me, in my dream,
Another, mightier, stood. "Thou son of earth,
Follow," he said, "and see the things not seen
By mortal eyes. There is a world not far,
Like unto earth, but sinless, which e'er since
The ruin of its sister silent stands
As if 'twere dead ; as fabled Niobe,
When grief for her fair children to cold stone
Transformed, so was that earth all petrified

By sympathy intense, throughout all time,
Frozen and lifeless. The streams roll no more,
Nor waters are, but stone. The trees, the flowers,
The grass—the very dew-drops crystallize
And harden into rock. The winged winds
Hang like dead eagles in the air. Its moon,
Its stars, its sun, all stone. The dwellers there,
Godlike in form and mien, like statues stand,
Cold in the shadowy groves—alive within,
Yet cased in adamantine panoply, for flesh."
Much more he said, which dwelt not in my soul
Distraught and slumbering.

But this remains :

I saw a host of angels sailing by,
Freighting a barge of fire, round as the moon
Riding the dark blue sky at noon of night,
Of winter night, through rocky seeming clouds,
Snow white. They spoke, and I could hear them tell
Of worlds, their ministry, where thoughts sublime
Lay on their shores, thick as the shells and sands
On earth's sea-beaten beaches, where unwrought
The quarries lie of genius infinite.

Here I awoke, nor ever night have passed
Before or since, dream-haunted thus. The world
Of spirits stood with gates wide open. How,
Not so, when I, a mortal undivest of clay,
Such converse held with beings aeriform ?
The soul hath warnings given, by day, by night,
Which fit it for its future.

But the morn
Had dawned meanwhile, and rising from my couch
I looked upon the Mississippi flood,
Seeking its broadest prospect. The grand woods
Seemed to take root in mists, the hill-tops shone
Far in the orient, with the crimson light,
Shot upward from the unseen source of day.
The sun's broad orb looked o'er the horizon's edge
Beaming like hope upon a bed of death.
Down flowed his rays o'er vale and forest green ;
And in the river's face, as in a glass,
His perfect orb lay mirrored. All around
So fair, so tranquil, so serene, that earth
Appeared a holy suburb of the sky,
Fit lodging for the blest.

My reverie
The slave-boy broke :—all wild with agony

He seized my hand and cried : " The orphan boy
Is dying," nor more said, but ran, but flew
From out my presence.

True it was, the boy,
The orphan boy was dying. Pestilence
Had breathed upon him as it passed. His face
Was sunken with a tinge of livid blue,
Like the dark azure of the mighty Rhone,
When the cold moon lights up its waters. Cold
And clammy was his little hand, nor pulse
Was in 't. His eyes shone with unearthly light,
Yet on the haggard features played a smile,
As, with a husky voice, " I know," he said,
" That I am dying, mother told me so.
Last night I dreamed she had me by the hand,
Beside clear waters, where we sat us down
And long communed. She told me she was now
An angel, and with other angels lived
I' the heavens. Soon, my, father too was there ;
But changed from what he was. Yet still I knew
His figure coming, but the while I rose
To meet him, a great spirit filled the place
With his appearance, and it said, ' Not now,
To-morrow.' Instantly I woke,—the morn

Is come—to-morrow—happy I to die—
Happy !"
Brief was his death-pang. As a prayer
Was offering for his soul, I saw his lips
Cease moving, in default of farther strength
For utterance, and his fringed eyelids fell
Down o'er his eyes. Oh, could I but have seen
His disembodied soul, when it beheld
The retinue of angels waiting there
To bear it up to glory, and relate
The marvellous raptures of that hour of change,
Immortal then would be my numbers.

The ritual of burial, nor long
The eulogy by that gray-headed sage
Pronounced :—
" The grave is full of hands which toiled ;
Of tongues which uttered words that cannot die ;
Of ears to softest music tuned ; of hearts
All hallowed as the shrine of love ; of heads
Garnered with wisdom ; feet which o'er the roads,
The weary roads of earth have walked long years ;
Of faces beautiful as angels ; now
Another trophy hath it won ; nor hath

In its dark halls been hid more sacred dust
Than this we leave alone ; nor all alone,
For aye near this, amid the pathless woods,
Angels shall vigil keep. Nor can we doubt
His soul could now be seen, if it were given
To mortals to behold the soul unhoused,
Shining with lustrous light in the serene
Of heaven, beside his mother's, as we see
Full oft in the blue sky, together set,
The moon and morning-star, ere peep of day,
In kindred loveliness."

Our toiling barque
Moved on, and left the orphan sleeping there
By the great river. Silence, solemn, deep
And dreadful brooded over us. Friend spake
To friend in whispers. Here and there were seen,
At times throughout the day, the passengers
In groups ; but oftener alone they walked,
Or stood, or sat ; each with his thoughts alone :
As when a thunder storm is on the wing,
Or earthquake trembleth near, all, all is calm,
Preluding strange convulsion ; so we felt.
The sultry day its long, dull, leaden hours
Dragged on, till the great yellow sickly sun

Began to redden in the west, and cast
His lurid glare o'er all the forest scene.
One came and said to me : "It is not grief
Hath kept the slave-boy on his couch all day,
But the dread plague."

He lay upon that verge
Which overlooks eternity. As oft
A star at morning, seen upon the peak
Of Chimborazo, which retires behind
That mountain suddenly, so did he look.
Delirium lit his glassy eyes with thoughts,
Apt for a higher being. Fixed, they shone
As marking some great spectacle, to which
His finger pointed. Aye his lips he moved,
Like one borne on the stream of eloquence.
At intervals, bright gleams of gladness spread
O'er all his face, like light upon the hills,
When the sun breaks through fleecy summer clouds,
Which float like islands in the azure sky.
Perchance angelic embassies he saw
Waiting to carry him away to heaven.
As one who sudden leaves the crowded hall
Of his own dwelling, nor his sorrowing house
Revisits more ; so he, an instant more,

And on his lips was stamped Death's signet pale

Ere long the fatal summons came again:
Was sounded, and another answered it;
'Twas whispered that the widow, too, was dead
Even as a taper's light quenched suddenly
At gusty midnight, so her soul had passed
From its earth-lamp. Deep gloom fell over us—
And darker shadow spread its sable wing
Around; as when the full-orbed moon retires
Behind the western hill, and leaves the vales
To the dim lustre of the far-off stars.

Her dying words were few; as one who heard
Beside her couch related. From her sleep
She woke, as morn dawned in the east, and said:
"The while I slept I heard the sounding wings
Of angel couriers hastening to the earth
From heaven—I saw—I saw my Lord, deceased,
Stand in the clouds, and beckon me from far
To meet him there, whereat I knew the hour
Of death not distant.—For although unseen,
'Twas palpable to my enraptured soul
Prophetical. My dream was more than dream:

No vision of the future e'er portrayed
That future clearer, truer than it did.
Awake, I see its wondrous scenery still,
And feel its mystic meanings."

Suddenly
She stopped, as if an angel gave the word—
The great pass-word of Death—one instant more,
And the death mystery invested her
With death's supremacy.

Near Genevieve
Upon a lonely islet green, o'er which
An ancient spreading tree its shadow flung
In the cool evening; quiet, beautiful.
Most beautiful to see was all the scene
Around. The river's rocky palisades,
By nature wrought with arcs and grand alcoves,
As if the spirits of the wilderness,
In the primeval ages, from the crags
Had scooped them giant niches meet to hold
Their own colossal statues, loomed aloft.
Befitting was the isle for sepulture
Of those we love; there both we buried,
The slave-boy and the widow. . . .

Near the prow

We sat again, Albert and I : there sat
The old man too. Day now around us shone
And not the moon, as when the other three
Communed with us of dreams—the orphan boy,
The slave and widow. I remember this
Of our converse that hour,—'twas Albert spoke :
" Dreams are," he said, " a mystery profound,
Which ever have enchained my secret soul
With deepest wonder. Who can tell but dreams
Are creatures of some other universe,
Which no astronomer with optic glass
Has yet explored, in which the hand of God
Has mapped out each man's history ; has mapped
out
The history of all the hierarchies ?
Each dream might be a part of a great whole ;
A section of our history sublime,
Far reaching, but unknown till thus beheld
In visions of the night. Wer 't so, the soul
Might then, whene'er the body slept, its eyes
Of sense all shut, look out beyond this world
Into this universe of dreams, and read
And study out its destiny on earth.
'Tis true God is the sole interpreter

Of dreams ; and yet his teachings by them, clear,
Might evermore fall silent on the soul,
As dew upon the tender flower.

" Till now,
Ne'er did I feel the wondrous things in dreams
Set forth. Not voice of trumpet sudden blown
At midnight, in some leaguered city, tells,
More truly, peril imminent, than the dreams
We heard, so lately, told of great events
Not earthly all. The universe of dreams
Has oped its portals wide, and out have flown
Its tribes like flocks of eagles. Who could think
The dreams rehearsed, were like to couriers
Commissioned in the secret halls of God,
Laden with revelations, grand, sublime,
Foreshadowing futurity, and soon
To be accomplished here, our eyes before."

" Conscious am I," the white-haired answering said,
" That to the meditative warnings oft
Of future things are given, that the soul
Forewarned, sees darkly, through the mists of time,
The coming fortunes, be they evil or good,
Which may befall it. Signs the future hath,

Outriders, like the winged lightning's flash,
Which heralds the far thunder ere it rolls.
Such signs are dreams, it may be, nor doubt I,
The shadows of events they run before,
Presaging what shall follow, on the road,
To warn the dreamer. Thus full oft have I,
At day's high noon when musing, sudden felt
My mind stirred by some thought electrical,
Most strange, and unconnected with the train
Of casual meditations, fancy free,
Which filled my bosom ere uncalled it came,
To tell the coming accident, which soon
Arose from out the darkling womb of time
To satisfy the monitory thought.
'Tis true the future has been seen from earth.
Up from the distance, like to chariots borne
Amid deep passes of the Alps, beheld
By traveller from some topmost mountain peak."

'Tis certain there is near the erring earth
A mighty world of dreams, to which in sleep
Men pilgrimages make: above that world
Of visions, other worlds there are more fit
For habitations of celestial shapes.

One world of beauty is invisible,
Most blessèd and most holy, made of old
And consecrate, for everlasting homes
To men redeemed, and sinless hierarchies.
Between it and the erring earth flows on
Unceasing intercourse : bright couriers
Aye come and go between them ; and, albeit
It is not given too much for mortal man
To speculate on what that world may be,
Yet dreams of holy men may adumbrate
Its glories, and God's finger ever points
Its presence, in each page of Holy Writ,
That faith, not sense, can see it.

Thence I pass
Unsung, what farther fell, as on we sped,
Skimming the shallows of the mighty flood,
Though meetest theme for minstrelsy. We reached
The shores of Iowa, and stepped astrand
On the green hillock, as the evening star
Rose in the sky, shining like hope, to cheer
And welcome us.

No numbers hath the harp
To sing the meeting of the lovers ; and 'tis well :
There is a joy too sacred to be told—

Art cannot picture it.—The sculptor's hand
Shrouds with the veil what all his skill divine
Must fail to render.

'Tis the nuptial night;
And though dark years, disastrous years, their robes
Have trailed across the tract which intervenes;
Yet fresh in memory it is. I feel,
The while I write, stirred with its presence—nay,
I hear the music filling all the place
With love and joy and witcheries. The veil,
The bridal veil half hides the fairy form
Of beauty leaning on that manly arm.
What silence solemn and profound is this!
The vows are uttered—those great words which live
Forever.

It was midnight when I left
That banquet hall with memories fraught.
The boat awaited me beside thy shore,
Dark Mississippi. Soon the plash of oars
Was heard, and I was launched upon the stream.
The night was calm and beautiful—the stars
Sat on their burning thrones of sapphire, like
A dynasty of kings. The silver moon
Was setting, and her light, her lustrous light

Bewitched the scenery, and cast o'er all
A beauty which no words can paint. The bluff
Of Iowa, though from my gaze fast, fast
Receding, showed the bridal mansion's light
Gleaming alone, from out its shadowy trees
By the broad river. Memory recalls
That tranquil scene—the terraces I see,—
The green acclivities of Iowa—
The lighted mansion bright with brilliant hopes.
I seem to hear the minstrelsy's soft swell,
As angel whispers o'er the waters borne,
Though years have rolled away, and all is changed,
Myself not less than all, since that fair night,
When last I looked upon those scenes sublime,
Nor ever saw that wedded pair again.

BOOK SECOND.

THE DREAM OF ALBERT.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

BOOK SECOND.

'Tis well Niagara is the joint domain
Of the great Saxon empires of the world,
America and England. Heritage
Becoming two such kindred nations, dame
And daughter.
Three years since, at noon, I stood
Upon the rocky verge which overlooks
The cataract and the Canadian shores.
I felt the solid battlement of rock
Quiver beneath my feet, as if the cars
Of God drove down the precipice. The yeast
O'er all that semicirque of waters, boiled
Like caldron over subterranean fires,
Kindled when earth was fluid. Hidden rocks
Vexed evermore the waters, dashing them

From side to side. Like living creatures seemed
The surges, which nor day nor night could rest.
I likened them to ocean monsters, seen
In storms by mariners ; at other times
To the white tails of the celestial steeds
In ancient history writ. The mighty chasm
Yawned in the strength of everlasting rock,
As though God's hand had smote it, as it smote
That rock in Horeb, and the waters turned
To burst from it forever. On the sides
Of the dread walls clung many a shrub and tree
Hiding the rents and crevices. Rocks huge
As those used erst in dread angelic war
By Milton sung, lay scattered far and near,
Slimy and black with ages passed away.
The place was as a vision seen in dreams,
Not earthly.

Wondrous was the light and shade
Which flitted o'er the gulf. Is it the wings
Of eagles floating past the sun, which cast
The long black shadows evermore athwart
That scene of glory ? Clouds scarce fly so swift :
Or may it be the pinions, to our eyes
Invisible, athwart the noonday sun

Of angels sailing, which shut out the rays
Flooding the world with light.—Uprose anon
Pillars of misty smoke, upswallowing all,
And straight evanishing. Bright rainbows shone
As sudden spanning all the wide abyss,
Then disappearing. Beautiful they shone,
And came and passed away too fast, as aye
The holy angels do. There was no sound
Heard there but the eternal roar and rush
Of the great flood, "as many waters heard"
Erewhile, by him listening to God. When gloomed
The place with awful clouds of smoke, I felt
That then the Holy God of nature passed
I' the cloud of mist before me.

All sublime,
All beautiful is but a state of mind.
Sublimity and beauty are within,
Not things external. What is the ravine,
The cataract, but for the mind, which gives
To each sublimity. We animate
The object with our feelings. What the charms
Of loveliest forms, but that our eyes and mind
Reflect themselves, the sense of what they give.
Association aye embellishes,

And makes delight in beauty. Beauty lives
In our own minds, and is itself the growth
Of that which is within us, not without.

All who behold the mighty cataract
Must see, must feel it diverse. Most the bard
Of all beholders, for his soul instinct
With thoughts remote and kindred, peoples it
With his own beings. Every changeful play
Of light and shade and mist inspireth him.
New images arise before his soul,
And pictures, whence to measure it. The bard
Potent creator is, and giveth life
To rocks and trees and streams and gulfs. His eye
Sees things unseen by other eyes.—He hears
The hidden voices of great nature.

So
The man of God that cataract surveys
With feelings diverse from the bard. To him,
"The voice of many waters" is the voice
Of God. The scenery carrieth him from earth
Into eternity. The imagery
By which he measures it is not of earth.

Lake Erie filling up Ontario,
Remindeth him of one eternity
Into another poured, or time's huge stream
Of years discharged into the ocean gulf
Of the dread shoreless future. Sight sublime
Those white-maned rapids, like the steeds which bore
The prophet heavenward, in Israel's cars :
The ceaseless thunderings of the cataract,
The roar of their great wheels, ascending aye
The mountains of Eternity. The bows
Across the vast abysm are arches fair—
Celestial bridges for the angels built.
The mists are God's earthrobes—the place itself,
The vestibule of the eternal state—
The dwelling of Jehovah—thus I felt,
As I stood musing on a summer day,
Contemplating the varied scenery :—
The islands anchored fast above the Falls—
The rush of waters like Euphrates poured
Through Naharmalca—the stupendous leap
Of the huge river—and the rapids, wild
Like chargers, rushing o'er the precipice ;
Or troops of angels on white horses, which

Stayed not for danger—rainbows numberless
Ever appearing and evanishing—
The trees in silence listening there, like seers
Awaiting revelations—and the rocks
Up-piled around me and above, in one
Huge picture ;—angel presences, methought,
Alone were wanting, to exalt the place
Into the glorious portal opened wide
Of all eternities ; eternity
Present and Past and Future.

Suddenly
I was alone no longer ; strangers stood
Beside me, yet not strangers all. The one
Had hoary hairs and venerable form ;
A stripling showed the other ; sire and son
They were. The sire was even he, from whom
I parted, erewhile, on the nuptial night
In Iowa. That instant memory brought
Back to my soul, like necromancer old,
All the events of the long parted time
Vivid and fresh, the interval of years
Contracted to a day.

Our greeting o'er,
We stood upon a wooded knoll, where full

We saw the vast abyss of waters wild,
Surging below, and howling like the sea
Of everlasting wrath. The lad cried out
As he beheld the scene,—"Now, I believe,
This is one spot of earth unmarred by man,
One nook of the primeval world, as first
Fashioned by God. These seem the waters white
And yeasty, which from out the shell of earth
Spouted new-made;—these spray drops, those which fell
From off the eaves of the new firmament,
Yet moist from its creation, ere the sun
Sent down his light and heat. Perchance these bows
Are beings of celestial birth and form—
The presences of the angelic hosts,
August, gigantic, fair, who shouting stood,
What time God made the worlds; still lingering here
Amid the scene, unwilling to forsake
The relics of creation's morn."
His sire
Took up the theme and said: "In this vast scene
God is made visible to us: God thought it all,

In His great mind, in the eternity
Bygone. The cataract—the battlements
Of fissured rocks, all gray and rent with years—
The wooded isles, dark spray, and rainbows bright,
Spanning the old abyss, were thought, erewhile,
Deep lodged and hid in the Almighty mind,
Matter is thought incarnate, thought divine.
The seas with all their hosts, the woods with all
Their tribes, the rivers singing through the woods,
The wild ravines, the unseen winged winds,
Which nestle in the tops of trees, and haunt
The precipices drear by ocean strand :
The stars, the moon, the sun, man, heaven itself,
With all its mysteries, are but thoughts of God.
Niagara is one sentence in the book
Of nature, rich in meaning ; beautiful,
Sublime and glorious ; but the Scriptures keep
More blessed thoughts. Niagara cannot tell
Of love, and grace, and mercy from of old
Hidden in the Almighty mind."

"The place,"
I said, "is ever holy unto me.
I also feel as if God's presence gave
The scenery its strange and awful power.

It is not more than one short step from this,
The spot we stand on, to eternity.
One leap would make immortals of us all.
As we behold it thoughts arise, which speak
The greatness of our nature. Thoughts like these
I ever have, when mid ancestral halls ;
Or lonely lingering at the fabled haunts
Of bards, where float the visions of their songs ;
Or standing near the ruins of old fanes
Festooned with ivy ; or by sepulchres
Shrining the dust of martyrs, whose great acts
Perish not from the earth ; or keeping watch
Beside the dying. Ever in the soul
Surges the sea of everliving thought,
Pulsating ever to and fro. The waves
Upon this sea, its tides, its calms, its storms,
Its currents—all are thoughts. This very scene,
All glorious as it is, and truly grand,
Receives new glory, grows the more sublime,
Invested by the soul's creative will
With wonders not its own."

Awhile we stood,
We gazed, we mused in silence, and our thoughts,
Like plumes plucked from archangel's wings, went ou

Into the infinite. I thought of God,
And asked myself, if all around I saw
Was shadow, while all underlying it
Was substance.

Not remote a height there is,
O'erlooking all the cataract. Tall trees,
Whose branching tops embraced and hid the sun,
A semicirque had formed, like columns vast,
The nave of some antique cathedral. Here
A rustic seat invites the traveller
To sit, and all the panorama grasp
In his enraptured soul. We sat us down,
And gazed, enwrapt in awe.

One mighty tree,
Upon the verge of the o'erlooking rock,
Our eyes attracted, for its trunk was scored
With names of travellers, like a column carved
With mystic hieroglyphs all o'er and o'er.
Wrought in the characters of olden time,
Albert's conspicuous was. The youth, whose love
Had drawn me, to behold his bridal rite,
Beyond the sounding Mississippi's flood.
At once outspoke the aged man, and said :
"Albert these letters graved, one early morn

Three summers since. Strangers we were, nor me
Did he observe, so deep intent he was
On this memorial. That night we met
Upon the Mississippi made us friends
Through all eternity's unreckoned years.
And if the souls of friends gone off to God
Revisit earth, his soul is here, e'en now."
I answering said : "Albert I know is dead,
But of his dying views, and hopes, and death,
Naught have I heard."

"Most glorious was this death,"
Replied the traveller.—"Much converse we held
Beside his death-bed. Long he lingered low,
Nor walked abroad in the rejoicing day,
But in his chamber sat communing much
With God. Great were the thoughts which sat them down,
Like kings, upon the throne of his pure mind.
Oft spake he of his death, and interviews
With angels in the visions of the night."

"The memory of holy friends," I said,
"Is ever fragrant, and the narrative
Of his last thoughts and feelings on the earth,

Would be as blessed incense to my soul.
Nor could there be a place more fit than this
For such discourse."
As holy pilgrim bent
On travel, to remotest lands of earth,
Who lingers not to gaze on beauty's face ;
Nor parley hold with travellers whom he meets ;
Or, as an angel sent to earth, by God,
With errand from the throne, so he began :—

" 'Twas midnight, and by Albert's bed I sat :
Startling he woke from wondrous dreams, and told
Straightway their import—'In my thought,' said he,
' I was alone, far from my native world,
Standing upon a precipice abrupt,
O'erhanging an abyss. Beneath, there rolled
An ocean, whose huge billows ever dashed
And broke to pieces on the jutting rocks.
I looked on every side, but no one saw.
There was not one memorial there of earth ;
No work of art, no footprint left to tell
If e'er before one of my mortal race
Had visited the battlement sublime.

Instead of worlds afloat, the firmament.
I saw beneath, as in a crystal lake,
Studding it, planets and suns innumerous.
The place was beautiful, unearthly all.

'Strange were the varied scenes I saw ; they came
And passed like the white vapory cloud of mist,
Oft seen by traveller on the hills of earth,
When wingèd storms come flying from the sea.
Now, 'twas a battlefield, where heroes closed
In deadly conflict ; now a shoreless sea,
Where sailed tall argosies bedight and trip
With sails and pennons streaming. Instantly
I saw cathedrals rising all around—
These disappeared, and glens and waterfalls,
And toppling mountains rose to view. I saw
Distinct the effigies of ages rush
Athwart the firmament, as figures fleet
Across the boreal sky.

'Ere I had time
To reason of the place, and the strange scenes,
An angel suddenly flashed into form ;
Of eminence beyond the height of man.
No airs of angel greatness put he on.

Saluting me—as brother brother greets,
From foreign land arrived, absent long years—
Then said : " Hail, brother, welcome to the world
Of holy dreams ; a world which lies thine own
And mine between, a world where God himself
To mortals future things reveals, and sights
Of angels gives.
" I know thee well, O son
Of earth. Oft have I met thee in this land
Of dreams and mysteries ; and visions borne
From God, all sinless, beautiful and full
Of hope, as scenery spread out along
The stream of life. The shadow followeth not
The body closer than do I thy steps,
E'er since thou hadst a being, ministering
Alway to thee. I ne'er have left thee once,
E'en in thy sleep, but vigil ever kept
Beside thee. Earthly matron could not hold
Such ceaseless watch. Upon the beetling cliff,
Where youthful travel took thee, there I stood
Between thee and the deep abyss below.
Beside the banks of rivers, where the love
Of nature carried thee, I always walked,
Tending thee. When the star of love arose

On thy young heart, 'twas I who whispered hope
Into thine ear. Thine agony of soul,
When sin and grace for mastery o'er thee
Contended, I beheld and pitied much.
What hour you knelt before the mercy-seat,
I covered you with my celestial wings.
Nor all my joy can I relate, as still
I saw the gathering thoughts of love divine,
E'en as a child upon the ocean shore
Gathers white pebbles."

'Now, an instant here
The angel paused, then I—"Hierarch of God,
I feel in some great presence, greater far
Than aught of earth. It seems to me thy face
In dreams hath met me often. Pass not then
Away so soon from me, as thou art wont;
But linger here and of thy history speak.
The distant memories of buried years
Are flocking round me, like a wingèd plump
Of eagles, at thy words, and my heart throbs
In wild anticipation, for thou seem'st
A messenger from God with tidings high
Of mightiest import laden,—can it be
I am akin to thee?—strange is thy speech,

For how should I a mighty angel have
Asleep or waking ?"

'Then replied at once
This angel of the Lord : "Earthborn, of kin
To thee I am, and formed for thee alone.
Thy Guardian Angel I,—to every soul
Is one—great office too. Thy mortal steps
To tend, for evermore was I ordained.
Ages ere thou wert born I lived, and none
But God can tell how much I longed for thy
Coming. I sought at every morn and eve
The dial of eternity, and traced
The shortening shadows of approaching years
Which heralded thy advent.

"On the tree
Of Being, every opening bud I watched.
Scarce from impatience could I hold, to see
The earlier generations of thy race,
Washed up on the young strand of earth, like barks
New launched on summer seas ; and hear the shout
Of welcome from their guardian angels, glad
To meet them. Never canst thou know the years

Of solitude, the slow-paced centuries
I passed alone in thought, awaiting thee :
For what were all the worlds of God to me,
And all the white-winged countless hierarchies,
Without thy presence ! Fitting mate for me
None was, till God made thee. The image fair
Of thee, all uncreate, within my soul
Stood ever forward, from the very morn
Of my own being, and allured me o'er
The gulf of ages, a great shoreless sea,
Between thy birth and mine. Beyond all words
To tell were my emotions, when I saw
Thy birthday breaking in the orient sky,
And heard the trumpet of Eternity
Declare thy advent. Beautiful thou wert,
Swaddled in mysteries and destinies.
I saw thee take thy place among the ranks
Of mortals ; immortality thy dower.
Earth seemed that instant other world, thou erst
Fairer than aught in the vast universe
Yet visited by me. Thou art mine own
Ordainèd ward. No mother ever loved
As I love thee, nor sire, nor maiden fair
Nurtured amid the dewy wilderness,

Where only flowers and brooks, and banks and braes
Are seen, and God's own holy voice is heard.
For sovereignty o'er all the souls create,
And angels, would not I my charge exchange
Of alway ministering to thee—espoused
We are by God for all eternity.
Nor would I injure thee, for the vast dower
Of seven eternities. Nor God ordains
That angel innocent, of all his host,
Who renders not account for soul of man
To him intrusted. Penalty for that
Is utter loss of being. If perchance
I could apostate turn, and cheat thy faith
With falsehood, instant cast beyond the verge
Of all created worlds, a thing accurst,
I there should moulder ; not like garden weeds,
Or tares or fumatory rank, uptorn from earth,
To vegetate again, and bring forth crops
Of ranker, fouler weeds ; but utterly
Outside creation, in a grave dug deep
For angels dead, where resurrection morn
Ne'er comes. Such is that angel's fate who fails
In duty. Oh most terrible the thought
Unuttered is. I live for thee alone—

Without thy presence ever by my side,
My immortality and destiny
Would be a dreary wilderness of thought :
Of bliss, and hope, and beauty, destitute."

'The angel waited here, with pause profound ;
Thence I :—"My Guardian Angel, if, in years
Gone by, thou hadst vouchsafed thyself as now,
How beautiful and fresh would earth have been :
To feel, to know thou walkedst by my side
O'er the steep mountain, through the summer
woods,
Adown the winding glen, and by the beach
Of the Atlantic, where I mused alone
What time the stars were bathing, and what time
The billows rode like chargers o'er the sands,
The howling winds pursuing them as fleet :
To think thou wert within my cottage home
Through gloomy winter's snowy, starless nights,
Unseen, unheard, an exile from the sky,
And ministering to me, to me alone.
Why didst thou not reveal thyself to us ?
My mother would have welcomed thee, and given
Befitting honor to thy ministry.

Her angel too,—to think we never heard
You whisper. Had we known such visitants
Were ever with us, and no dwelling had
Celestial, and of architecture fit
For beings so divine, we would have sought
In prayer heartfelt, the Throne of God, to build
You tents in our near neighborhood. One spot
There was beside the brook, a grove most rich
In branching trees, and winding walks, and flowers,
And ivy, and sweet eglantine, where oft
I mused, and thought 'twas fitting place for spirits,
On errand from the sky, to stoop and pause.
Thou couldst have lodged by day, by night, and aye
In our devotions joined : nay, taught us too
The airs of minstrel angels. Pity 'tis
Thy ministry was hidden from our eyes,
As hidden as the mysteries of life
In life's young morn. Thy history is full
Of beauty, fuller than all tales of love
E'er heard before : it lifteth my young thoughts
Above the earth. If it be given thee more
To utter of thyself, oh ! tell to me that—
Impatient more to learn."

"My history,"

Answered my angel, "to antiquity,
Before the stars arose and sang, goes back;
Long, long before the brood of worlds was hatched;
And ere the seeds of the vast planets fell
Into the soil of time, and there took root:
Myriads of ages ere the central suns,
Amid these families of orbs, their vast
Abysmal urns filled up with teeming years:
And ere the earth, the erring star of God,
Was aught but an idea in his mind.

"My memory is immortal, nor from it
Can drop one thought: forgetfulness is all
Unknown to spiritual beings. When arose
The angel tribes at God's creating voice,
I too. Eternity until that hour
Was empty—none but God was there. I was,
When I awoke to being, as I am,
And have been since, save the ideas vast
Gathered by travelling through the universe:
I felt I was a thing of thought God made
To live forever, and to minister
To thee forever and for aye.

"An arch
Standing upon the buttresses sublime,
Of two eternities I saw—the thing
First seen by me, and with a countless host
Of beings like myself its shining height
Ascending. I alone had reached and stood
Upon the keystone, backward looking.

"Next
I saw, no voice was heard in all the place,
The Spirit of Eternity go forth
Amid Eternity, seed scattering,
Like husbandman in thine own earth-world, when
Springtide hath come.

"When I did look again,
Ages, or what seemed ages, had passed by,
And where the seed was sown, the stars and moons
And suns were growing.

"Last of all, I saw
The earth, thy home-world, take its place, amid
The firmament, when instantly a shout
Of joy arose from the great family
Of angels.

"Since that ancient day of time,
Travel hath carried me away

Into remotest worlds, which none
Had visited, of all my myriad hosts :
Into the wildernesses drear and lone,
Around the poles of the great universe,
Unfit for dwelling places, have I gone.
Stars growing all along the milky-way
Visited. On the alpine peaks of worlds
Which never can be trod by human feet
Stood. Through the gardens and the groves
Of sinless worlds, the heritage divine,
Ordained for souls elect, when they shall go
Away from heaven to meditate on earth
Their nature world, roamed have I, glad, glad—
Musing, and holding intercourse with God, have I
Spent centuries in highest heaven itself.
Still wondrous interest ever has thy world
To me. There is no cloudy mountain-top,
Nor hidden glen found out by streamlet clear,
Running with music in its heart, from morn
To eve ; nor grove, with old ancestral trees,
And lawns, forever consecrate to love
And minstrelsy ; nor castellated rocks,
To memories of olden time espoused ;
Nor upland lake, sequestered 'mong the hills,

Where clouds delight to dwell, have I not been.
But more anon"—Then paused.
'Here out I spake
Unto the angel, saying: "Holy one,
Thy history most glorious is, replete
With the antiquities of time and earth.
Thy memory goeth back beyond the fall
Of angels from their heavenly thrones. Though dire
Their story, and disastrous to my race,
New view of God it would unfold to me,
If told."

"This much may I unfold to thee," he said.
"The sun of man's first Sabbath on thy world
Had set all glorious, as the sunsets were,
Ere yet the black angel, sin, trailed his robe
O'er the blest earth. There was no angel left
Around the great white throne, save those bright
hosts
Who never leave its shining steps. We all
Had gone to our appointed posts amid
Immensity. Some stood upon the walls
Of heaven; some to the distant stars and suns
Vigil had gone to keep; but many more

On pilgrimages to these worlds, to see
Their seas, and streams, and hills, and woods and lakes—
The haunts where angels in the mighty past
Had travelled. Some beside the sea of glass
Stood gazing on the suns bemirrored there.
Some stood alone, in meditation deep
On the tall hills of bliss. Some sat and talked
Within the bowers which skirt the crystal sea;
Some wrote their thoughts in books; some minstrelsy
Achieved; some with the ALMIGHTY ONE
Communion held. Upon the Atlantic strand
Of earth, I walked alone, absorbed, and rapt
In vision, questioning the future, when
Thou too shouldst, musing, wander there.
"My dream
Was broken by the awful trump of God—
The trumpet of eternity, whose blast
Shook all the universe. Portentous was
That clangor; ne'er before had its dread voice
Been heard since time created was.
Thrice blown, its summons every angel heard,
And sudden hasted to the mount of God.

As I passed through the firmament of earth,
On rapid, rapid pinion, fleet as thought,
The road and highways of immensity
Were filled with angels on the wing. Nor long
Till we the everlasting valley reached,
Outspread on each side round the awful mount
Of the Eternal—there the synod met,
The synod of the angels : thither rushed,
As rush at times the thoughts of myriads
Of men, into the opened ear of God,
When yawning earthquakes frighten them. Great was
The number of the shining angels there
Before the throne, obedient to the call
Of God. Like a great noiseless sea were we :
Upon the very pillars of the throne
Some leaned, and I upon the steps.

" The mount
Itself was hidden in a cloud of light,
Of lustrous light, intensely clear, which shut
From every eye the throne. No more we saw
Beyond the steps ascending, and the lamps,
The mystic lamps around them.

" Suddenly

That argent shining cloud was rolled away
From off the mountain, and we saw the throne,
And ONE on it human in form. Nor e'er
Before such sight had been beheld, or felt, of eyes
Angelic even—nor that presence of God
Erst been made manifest. Desire intense,
And aspirations had been nursed, sublime,
Since first we were, that wondrous brightness through
To pierce, and find some outlines shadowing Him:
And yet to us that wish, o'erbold perchance,
Had been vouchsafed not. True, we could not brook
To see infinitude, and yet we wished that God
Would nearer come to us; and in our form
Be seen for briefest instant. Now that wish
Had answer, but the form he took was man,
Not angel.

"Mighty the emotion was
Of every spirit, in that vast conclave
At sight of God. Upon his head blazed out
The diadem of dread eternity,
And in his hand the sceptre. On the throne
There lay the opened volume of decrees,
Old as eternity itself. Above

His crowned head, the bow of mercy hung,
And at his feet, like angel sleeping, lay
Justice Eterne. No word was uttered there,
Speechless we stood, and gazed, and marvelled long,
At Godhead visible.

"The mystery soon
Of Inspiration, like a cloud o'ercame
Us, as we gazed, and fitted us to hear.
The trumpet spoke again, twice, thrice—the trump
We heard erewhile. Then fell these awful words
Upon our ears, the words from out the throne,
The grand white throne.

"'Intelligences first
And highest in the scale of being—hear:
Your chiefest angel, and his chosen peers,
No more shall sit upon their vacant thrones.
Scarce had ye left the battlements what time
The evening anthem ceased, when he, unbid.
The secret chamber of eternity
Entered, infringing on its mystery;
The prophecy he read of his own fall,
And of his own estate forfeit to man—
I' the future born, new-born, on earth's young star.
No more he learned, but fled with hasty foot,

And told his listening peers, who not rebuked
His treason : instant down he fell from heaven :
Such fate befell them all. But fear not ye—
Powers, Principalities, for treason here
No more shall enter in—elect are ye,
Infallible.'

" No word, angel returned
To Him upon the throne, for holy awe
Constrained us—awe, that black apostasy
Had crept into the citadel hard by,
The seat of God. Nor had he ceased to speak
Ere the broad glory closed around the mount,
And hid him from our eyes.

" While we stood
In silence musing, suddenly a sound
Was heard, as if of messenger august
Approaching, who, from distant world came on
With urgent tidings, of most high import.
Then louder woke the trumpet's blasts. At once
We saw the angel of the earth alight,
Before the veiled throne. His tidings were
Awful, and tingled in our ears, like some
Death message. Audience instantly had he

From God within the veil. These were the words
He spake :

"'Sire of Eternity, the Earth,
Thy youngest child, is lost. The spirit of sin
Hath rapt it from us. All around its coasts
Angels are stationed, till I shall return,
Forbidding all egress to the exiled
From heaven. The glorious man that sat its throne
And his fair mate no more are sovereign there :
He too has been discrowned, and down the slope
Of ruin rushes. By the guarded gate
Of Paradise, I left him sitting, low
At his feet, a suppliant, lay his spouse
Despoiled of all her beauty. Intercourse
Between that star, and all the sisterhood
Of worlds, is closed. Naught heard I when I left
But the terrific wail of man, and the shouts
Of the apostate angels.' Thus spake he,
The angel of the earth, and waited mute
God's answer.

"Fast as thought lights up the mind,
So rent the veil of glory, and he spake
Again, the Great Invisible from out
The mystic throne :

"'Son of the morning, Son
Of light and truth, the loss of earth, and fall
Of man, is written full in the decrees
And secrets of eternity. This too
Is written, angels shall apostatize,
Nor e'er be reinstated—Justice must
Her symbol have. Of man it is not so:
He may redeemed be, and so redeemed,
Our Mercy to all time shall symbolize.
The earth-star hath a destiny more grand
Than all her sister spheres. Myself its soil
Will tread in sorrow; and at my advent,
Horror that *time* shall shudder at, and earth
Be riven; joy, that shall make angels weep
Shall succeed and surcease. For erring man
The ocean of eternal love is stirred
To its unfathomable, ancient depths.
But for the angels mercy never pleads.
The earth shall be ennobled; angels too,
Who endure sinless, shall their destinies have
With man's enlinked."

I thought the angel's voice
Trembled on uttering these mysterious words.
A cloud, too, passed athwart his face—the words

The while went echoing through my throbbing
heart.
When fitting pause was o'er, soon as I saw
The angel's musing cease, I ventured this
To say :—
" Brother divine, thou knowest all I ask,
And more ; imperishable are thy words
As blossoms on the tree of life, replete
With beauty and with life. Oft have I sighed
For tidings of my sire, and mother dear
In heaven : a child was I, when angels came
For father, and him took to dwell with them
In their celestial world. Orphans we were,
I and my sisters too ; I eldest, they
Younger : we three but children under five.
The morn I was an orphan, my grand-dame
Me took to gaze upon his face, and said—
I, silent, wondering why he was so pale
And still—that I was now an orphan boy.
Her words were meaningless to me, and yet
They pierced me through, the language from the
dead.
I speak not of our orphanage : of it
Thou canst not know : none but the orphan knows.

Eventful history is ours, most mine,
As manhood came to me, my mother died :
Her illness, death and burial, were all told
At once to me.

"I never can forget
That morn we parted, one short year before ;
Beside the hawthorn tree, near by the door,
Her cottage door, we parted : fair she was,
Most beautiful, as holy cherub is,
Her blue eyes aye reflected heaven to me :
Suffused they were with tears that morn — her hand —
Her long, fond kiss — her words of warning kind —
Her agony at parting — all I feel —
I see — I hear this moment, as if years
Had been rolled, and I again stood near
Her cottage door, that morn."

The angel's face
Brightened with thoughts divine, as I here paused ;
And soon in tones seraphic said : "Most filial thou,
Son of the erring star of time. Thy sire
Sitteth among the prophets of the earth,
Enthroned, encrowned, before the great white throne ;

With them in high converse he takes a part :
With them on mighty embassies to distant orbs
He goes. Oft have I met him leading on
Cherubic cohorts to the earth ; once him
Sailing the Empyrean, I beheld,
None with him save his angel. Glorious was
His mien, as one on Mercy's errand sent
To some wayfarer on the strand of earth.
Thy mother, too, oft have I seen of late :
More beautiful now is her eye of blue ;
More fair her face : ethereal all is she :
Nor is there in the sinless empire vast,
Daughter of earth, with witchery of mien
Surpassing. Spirits just arrived from worlds
Which never saw the earth, pause to admire
On passing her. Well is she known up there,
For every angel from the earth arrived,
She visits to inquire if they saw thee.
There is not in thy history one jot
Unknown to her. But yesternight, just as
The Evening Star uprose, I bade her hail,
As she came near to minister to thee :
And hail, when with the angels of the night
Upflew, when morning lit upon the hills

Of earth. Thy father and thy mother hold
Long parleys by the stream of life ; and in
The bowers of bliss, make symphonies at morn
And eve, on their great golden harps."

"Great angel of Jehovah, bear with me,"
I said, "for I have many things to ask.
First, what is death, or rather what is it
To die ? Does the soul think in the death-hour ?
Does the soul see at once the spirit realms ?
When it is loosened from the body frail,
Doth it remain a season on the verge,
I' the mists of the shadow ? Who first gives it hail
When like uncaged eagles out it flies ?
How far is to the throne ? What escort bears
Its frailty to the Judgment Seat ? Are souls
Which have already found immortal homes,
In the bright country of the hierarchies,
Spectators of the dying struggle ? Tell,
Tell me, O angel ! does the soul unfledged
Take all its thoughts and feelings up with it,
And leave its body like a shattered harp,
Whose strings are jangled and flung loose ? Perchance

'Tis sin to ask such mysteries divine ?
If not, O answer me ; but if in part
'Tis sin, speak part : of part be mute. Explain,
Spirit, if thou may'st, the mystery of death !"

Straight as I paused, the angel musing, stood
A moment, then replied : " The mystery of death
I know not, none but who have died may know—
That did I never, nor can I ever die."

" Hold !" I exclaimed, " wise angel ! art thou then
A creature, finite in thy sense, as I ?"

Answering, he said : " We both are angels, thou
Incarnate angel art ; but spirit I,
Pure, immaterial spirit. To mortality
Matter must yield, but spirit may not die.
Much of the history of man I know,
Much of angelic history—of death
Nothing, although thousands of years I live.
Ask me of any of the far-off worlds—
Ask me of the immortal hierarchies—
Ask me of the remotest future, far
Beyond the confluence of all the streams

Of time, i' the ocean of Eternity.
Ask me of earth's sublimest deed of crime—
Ask me of the remedial scheme of grace !—
Ask me of Earth, and Hell, and Heaven, and God,
And I will answer thee ; but ask me not
Of death, for in it I no portion have."

"Spirit," I said, "almost omniscient thou,
Bearing the burden of such knowledge. Ne'er
Shall I in lore ascend to height so great.
I feel as one upon a mountain-top,
Arrayed with clouds, who cannot see the vale
Below, with all its varied scenery ;
Nor the blue welkin overhead. My thoughts
Run to and fro, and come again to me,
Like messenger sent forth, who still returns
Unfit to make report. Enlighten me,
Great angel, of the mighty past, and tell
Of the Death Angel. Much I dread to meet
His advent. In my youth oft have I waked
Amazed, at midnight, for I thought the wail
Of the sad wintry wind around our house,
Was the dread herald of his silent tread.
Are the surroundings, and the awe

Which thrills our hearts, at hearing of his name,
But the wild mystic dreams of poet souls ?
Tell me, I pray thee."—How the face divine
Of the attentive angel brighter gleamed.
It may be that the memories of scenes,
Of grand triumphal death scenes flashed across
His vision. This, he answered :—

"True, I know
Thy race dreads the death-angel, but it is
The wild creations of your bards they dread.
The angels, who let out the deathless soul
From its clay palace, are as numerous
As are the spirits which they do release.
On earth each prison has its keeper, who
The keys keeps faithful, so is 't in all worlds.
There is an angel stationed at the door
Of each imprisoned soul, to ope the leaves
And set it free, when the eternal knell
Announce the hour. Thine own death-angel now
Tarries, though thou him seest not. Serene
And glorious he, as all heaven's angels are.
The fallen hierarchies, discrowned and lost,
No office hold in thy fair earth. They seek
Such office, but seek vainly : only when

The soul has sinned away its day of grace,
And left the flesh, their sovereignty begins
To sway and rend it. But a guarding spirit,
The sentinel and servant, ministers
Each to one soul. The Spirit of Death has charge
The wheels of life to stop, whene'er the time
Of the soul's unbodying arrives, nor he
Knoweth the hour, but vigilant must wait
Until the moment. There no darkness is
Forewarning him. This secret God keeps pent
In his own mind. This Spirit of Death has charge
To keep that shrine deserted of its soul,
Until it shall come back for it. Great charge!
Oft have I seen the angel hovering o'er
The corpse yet warm with recent life, while round
Stood friends in anguish all convulsed:
O! little thought they of the presence there
Of him immortal and invisible.
There is no bier, whence one may not be seen
Watching o' it, nor grave without one nigh.
Oft have I, ere thou wert born into life,
O'erflown the antique countries of earth,
By winter's windy, gloomy, midnight moon,

Nor e'er yet untended grave have seen
Of angel.

"At the resurrection hour,
When centuries of intervening years
Have been ingulfed in the vast shoreless sea
Of old Eternity, the Spirit of Death
Shall build the palace up again, fit house
For the returned and travelled soul. Sublime
Is the death-angel in his love: sublime
Watching the sepulchre untired, through long
And dreary centuries."

"Most marvellous
Thy teachings are, O angel," answered I.
"'Tis strange that youth and age alike should dread
A myth. Now answer me this one thing more.
Explain the meaning of that valley dark,
And called, 'of the Shadow of Death,' with horrors thick,
Of which I oft have read and dreamed."

At once
He thus upspake: "There is a Vale of Death
Which thou must cross to reach Eternity;
But 'tis a place with fancies thick set round,
And dreams of fiction. Beautiful it is

As the approach to heaven must ever be.
Another vale there is for those who die
Weighed down by loads of unrepented sin,
Which they must pass toward their appointed place,
Where'er that be. Beauteous *it* cannot be ;
But of its horrors, possible or true,
Naught know I, nor can tell."

"Is that the Vale
Of Death," I asked, "the which I must pass through,
Whose gate I see, thick thronged with holy souls,
Its wide-spread portals entering into bliss ?"

"That is thy Vale of Death," he answering said,
"Oft have I travelled through it : angels aye
Are journeying there : some, business—pleasure some
Invite. Great multitudes were there, that day
Messiah passed through it from Calvary ;
Thicker than trees amid the wood, or stars
In northern skies, when winter's icy winds
Howl o'er the ocean. In all worlds 'twas known
Messiah would explore the Vale of Death :
The hour was known ; and from most distant orbs

Upon the outskirts of the universe,
Angels to meet him came. I too was there,
And heard the cry of anguish—Why hast thou,
My God ! my God ! forsaken me ? and heard
From out the gloom, the answer dread to hear,
Unheard of man—Thou art forsaken thus,
Because for man thou diest, thyself a man.
I saw the Man-God die, and with his soul
Went on to bliss. Vast, vast, beyond all words
To tell, was the assemblage gathered there,
Waiting in silence all along the road
To glory, there to welcome him. The scene
Was only grander, when he came again
Embodied, living, from the sepulchre.

" Within the sepulchre, that hour I stood
When he returned from his great tour to heaven :
I saw him enter in, and the cold form
Laid there, reanimate. I saw the door
Of the sealed tomb to the angel's touch unloose,
And heard distinct seraphic voices tell
Grand tidings to the faithful few who came
At early morning, ' Christ is risen to-day ! '
Nor knew I e'er till then, that the low grave

Is not a darksome, doleful place, but full
Of angel presences, and so most fit
For saints to lodge in. Holy is the grave
Since Christ himself the precincts has passed through.
And holy too the avenue which leads
From earth thereunto—such thy Vale of Death!
The entering soul, each one, his passport hath,
Unknown, unheard on earth. That secret word
To thee shall be revealed, whene'er the hour
For thine unbodying comes."

"Seraphic friend
And brother," I exclaimed, "surpassing kind
Is God to give me one so wise as thou
In mysteries sublime, my steps to guide.
Most grateful I for all thy lore has told,
Yet more I wish to know—there is a mist
Before me, that concealing, which my soul
Yearns to know perfectly. Great is thy power
Of speech. So smooth thine oratory flows,
So full of pictures, that I comprehend
As if by instinct, all profoundest things
In living light displayed. I know, before
My thirsty eyes thou canst portray 'the new
And living way.'"

"My ward, my child beloved,"
The angel said, "'the new and living way,'
Relates to the soul's feelings. If its thoughts
All cling to Christ, as verdant ivy clings
To the cathedral ruins, then they flow
All heavenward, through 'the new and living way;'
If, otherwise, the soul be filled with self,
On its own merits dwell, and deeds of love,
As fitting it for place i' the realms above,
Then the old road of works must it toil through,
Which hath long years been shut—a road no more.

"Perchance—for I would have thee go with me
Distinct and clear of mind—should I ascribe
Man's twofold way of life, evil and good,
As two diverging roads, this old, that new,
Through Time, from its beginning to the dawn
Of his Eternity, before him laid—
Better might'st mark it. Every living man
Hath his own phase of genius, which subtends
His sensuous being, and each several phase
Its own peculiar orbit, in which to move
Its thoughts like planets round their sovereign sun.
The lover's orbit is a moonlight path,

Where love and hope and beauty linger ; where
No storms nor sorrows find a resting-place.
The poet's is along the stormy tops
Of precipices, by the ocean's verge,
By sounding waterfalls, by woods, by wilds,
Through continents unseen by vulgar eyes,
Where thoughts grow on the trees, like leaves and fruit,
And where the soul communes with presences
Revealed to bards alone. The ambitious soul
Hath for its high emprise an orbit too.
He sees his name writ in his country's scroll
Of deathless glory. Like as those who stray
O'er the earth's mountain-tops, or valleys green ;
So travel ever all those souls along
Their chosen orbits. Orbits too, there are,
Of good and evil ; nor are souls exempt
From choice of one or other.

" From the dawn
Of time, far back as the first Sabbath day,
A road was traced, by which the souls, first made,
Might travel to their goal ; but short the time
The road was pervious. It was locked what time
Man fell apostate. Then its gates I saw

By angels closed and barred to ope no more.
For man's obedience to the law henceforth
Impossible, no more should proffered be
The master-key to move the locks divine.
Oft through departed years, travelled have I
To see its portals, if they e'er should ope,
But still fast closed they stood, these direful words
Writ high above the lintel, words of flame,
'Our God is a consuming fire,'—no soul
By that old road finds entrance into bliss.

"Now mark me—of the new and living way
Decreed of old, ere yet the universe
At God's creative voice arose. The way
Of grace it is—the openest road, most wide
For human feet or angels. By it the soul,
Filled with this scheme divine, at ease ascends
To bliss eternal.

"Like a river, vast
As inland sea, which hath its fountain head
In some frore glacier, or mountain range,
This scheme goes back to deep eternity,
Ere yet the angels were, or the ancient stars
Were lighted; secret, grand, and full of love

I' the Father's bosom slumbered, which the Son
There lying, only knew.—'Twas this, that God
The Father, in whom represented is
All Godhead, which can be, in one threefold,
Father, Son, and Spirit ; in his Son sole-born,
To guilty man should reconciled be :
That scheme the Son accepted, and became
Vicegerent for his chosen. These the terms
Of that high covenant—Messiah should
Incarnate be, incarnate die for man,
And rising for him, intercession make
Before the Father's throne. To this
The Holy Spirit the last great sanction gave ;
And ratified it stood, that He his share
Of this contract sublime, the Elect of God
To enlighten, sanctify and glorify,
Should have forever. Souls which comprehend
This plan of grace eterne, and in it find
Supernal bliss, are pilgrims in 'The new
And living way.' What time this scheme was oped
To angels, all our harps awoke to song,
Sweeter than any minstrelsy, erewhile
Poured in the ear of Godhead ; or since then
Breathed from Æolian harps, or Dorcian mood

Of soft recorders, until time was full,
And harps seraphic Christ triumphant hailed
With heaven's full diapason, and the shout
Of Hallelujahs to the Prince of Peace.
I felt that earth was yet God's world, nor cast
Forever from his presence all divine,
All merciful. The planets and the stars
Would soon be dashed to atoms, if they sought
New orbits for their wanderings ; so the soul
Which keepeth not within the strait confine
Of this new way of grace its steadfast track."

The angel paused ; I felt his argument
As one who listens to an orator
Inspired with his own theme. I now beheld
"The new and living way" as clear as if
The wondrous ladder of the patriarch,
With angels thronged, before me rose. Anon
The wish for ampler knowledge moved within,
And thus again I spoke to him, and said :
"My Guardian Angel, bear with me awhile
In all my asking. Is no volume writ
By angel which combines all angel lore ?
Had I such tome, into the wilderness

I would hie me and revolve it, till I grew
Wise as thou art."

Instant he, answering, said :

"I know thou lovest books, when yet a child
They pleasured thee. Oft have I gone with thee
Unto the peak of toppling crag, amid
The forest, where the waterfall alone
Was heard, retreat befitting meditation ;
And watched thee for long hours, intent on song
Or prose new-builded. Earthly books there are
Fit for all time, fit for all study, some :
One for Eternity—then wait—thou must,
Till thou art glorified, and thou shalt find
Thee books, unfolding mysteries beyond
All present wishes, all imaginings.
Each planet hath its own peculiar books—
Its own hath heaven. The angels authors all—
Greater than others, some. Their voyages
Long might detain thee ; and their works to view,
Would claim eternities of mortal time,
Mere cycles of Eternity. Their lays
Outbid imagination. In the worlds
Naught is there like the archetypal book
Of God, nor e'en the book so called below—

It stands 'mid the library of heaven, all writ
In the mystic letters of Eternity.
Be patient ! nigh at hand the hour awaits
Thy disembodiment. What glories then
Shall burst on thy enraptured soul at death ! "

" And stand I on the brink of death " I cried,
" O angel ?—for I fear to die—to stand
Unclothed and naked to the inmost thought,
Before the eyes of the Most Holy One !
My sins are great, so great, that though I hide
In the cleft-rock of mercy, they rise up
And shroud the star of hope from me. My hand
Of faith seems withered, and I cannot cling
Unto the naked word of God."
" Hold, hold ! "
My Guardian Angel cried : " The Gospel scheme
Meets every want and need of sinful man.
Demerit, and what merit, alike are
To the eye of God. Grace—grace alone thy kind
Hath lifted to salvation. Grace from God
Is not bestowed on goodness ; nor from what
The world calls vice withheld. The Father's will
Alone is the exhaustless source of grace.

The love of God in Christ the mystery is,
Involved in saving man. This well I know,
For God I heard announce it, on that night
Man was exiled from Paradise. I met
That very night with all our hierarchies,
To meditate on it. Vast multitudes
Of angels have e'er since in session been,
Investigating this high problem. Hence
To all the Gospel pardon offered is.
Fear not, earthborn, though great thy sins, yet Christ
Is greater—get thee faith."
"'Tis that I lack,"
I answered sorrowful.
To this, he said,
In kindest phrase: "My mortal brother, faith
Is God's rich gift. Faith thou canst not create
As 'twere a poem. It is given, not made.
He giveth it like all his other gifts,
As seemeth good to him. Ask for it, thou.
Look in and see, if in thy heart e'en now
Its living germs be not. Faith never looks
Within the heart, but still without. It takes the word

Of God in all its nakedness. If doubts
Arise, it dashes them aside, as one
Who swimming breasts the billows from his path.
As living pictures set before the eye,
The promises writ there it makes its own,
As they were things embodied. 'Tis perchance
Assuring faith, for which thou sighest. Well!
It none can find, till they have reached the height
Of holiness sublime. *Adhering* faith
Is saving. If thou have not joy and peace,
Still to the Saviour cling—to Him hold fast!
Remind Him of his promise and be saved.
The patriarchs, 'tis writ, all died in faith.
I saw them in the harvest-field of truth
Go reaping handfuls of the promises,
And carrying them, as reapers carry sheaves,
Adown the Vale of Death."

I answered here:

"The promises I know, and feed on them
As feeds the bee on flowers—perennial flowers.
Those promises round mortal sorrows twine,
As roses young 'bout columns riven and gray.
Hast thou," said I, inquiring, in reply,
"E'er whispered, my own angel, in mine ear

Such promises, for often have I felt
As if the air with wings around me waved ;
When some bright glimpse of promised hope, illumed
My wavering soul ? "
Cautious he answer made :
" The promises perchance, inscribed divine
On angel banners, borne by them in pomp
On Mercy's embassies, have flashed in light
Upon thy musing soul, as scenery
Beheld in youth, arises suddenly,
Ofttimes before the mind of one grown old.
Perchance the converse thou hast overheard
Of disembodied spirits, passing nigh,
In high communion, through the realms of space
Whispering of the promises."
As here
He paused and looked on me, " My mother," thus
I spake, " was aye a constant gatherer
Of promises ; and many a time for hours,
In winter's gloomy, windy midnight, I
Sat with her and collated them. That still
The pages where they lie, with pencilled lines
Drawn by my infant hand, inscribed are

All through the treasured Bible of our house.
I stored them too i' the tablets of my mind,
Often repeating them. ' 'Twas well,' she said,
' For me to hoard them there, for time might come
When I should need them, and no book be nigh.' "

The curtains of my dream were drawn apart,
And all its scenery 'gan shrink and shift,
As mist towers melting in the morning glow ;
When for an instant the angelic form
Of him, who spake less distinct and less
As he were vanishing : " Stay—stay," I said,
" O angel, nor invisible become
To who would ask thee much, or ere thou go.'
Hereon the dream rekindled ! up he loomed,
As on some vale or wide expanded plain
An heavenward spire late wreathed in vaporous clouds
Starts into sunlight. He, a thing of life
And glory, e'en more glorious than before.
His face, how fair, how meek and holy ! words,
Earth-words cannot portray him. Then, these words
He spake, and they were as the words of one

Who sees some spectacle of mystery
Approaching nigh : " My earthborn brother haste,"
He said, " even now I hear the sound of wings
Far off—portending mightier change ! "
" Yet hold
A little, of my Saviour I would ask—
The Prince of Peace, and where his presence now ? "

" This," quickly answered he, " is all I have
To tell thee. To all angels dear the name
Of Jesus is, and ever upmost stands
His image, in our Godlike memory.
His face, his form, his plans, his words, his works,
Are precious to us all. The minstrelsy
Of Heaven is full of him. Memorials
Of Him fill every avenue of bliss,
And battlement, and hill, and vale, and stream,
And sea. All worlds are full of his great name—
The sceptre of Eternal Sovereignty
Is holden by a human hand, that hand
Messiah's. Eyes which see the universe ;
The ears which hear all sounds of joy and woe
Of all intelligences ; yea, the mighty heart
Which hath pulsations for all things, are His."

He paused, for nearer, and more near, approached
The angel embassy. Myself, I heard
What seemed the rolling of the chariot wheels.
At once I asked : " Who comes, O angel ? thou
Who seest them, speak to me."

Outspoke he clear :
" Ten thousand times ten thousand angels. Such
Celestial cavalcade arrives on earth
For every holy soul unbodying."

" Stay,
Stay, angel ! " I exclaimed, " a wondrous change
Is passing. Is it the mystery of death ?
I feel as one who sudden floats away
On a receding wave. My glass of thought
Is broken into fragments. What is this ?
Am I an immaterial ray of light
Extinguishing ? Am I a setting star,
Or rising planet on yon distant sky
Beyond those opening breaches ? Can it be
I am myself no more ? I feel my thoughts
Around me throng like eagles on the wind :
Each grander, mightier, than erst. Am I
All soul—What presences are these—What light
Is this ? "

The voice of the old man shook here,
And for an instant suddenly was hushed.
I too was silent. Soon the mastery
O'er his emotions fitted him to tell
The sequel ; and he thus resumed, and told
The whole—these are the words :

"Nor other thought
Passed o'er Albert's lips. The narrative sublime
Was ended of his dream divine. A flash
Of light passed suddenly across his face,
As if the soul in passing out illumed
The shrine, where it had lodged through all its years.
As suddenly his circling arms embraced
What seemed to me the air, but likelier was
The soul outgoing. Instantly he changed
Into a marble bust of loveliness !
I looked into his eyes for thoughts. I saw
The light which burnt erewhile, so brightly then,
Quite gone. All left of him on the erring earth
Was soulless dust. I passed, not needed there,
The doors of morning. Isabelle, his wife,
Hung o'er him—how, I tell not.

"The gay morn

Had dawned. The white mist lay like drapery
Upon the broad and beauteous river. Low
I' the east the morning star shone out. On the ear
Of morn no pilgrim voice arose. The winds
Slept in the woods, the matin-bird i' the bower.
The glittering dew engrained the robes of earth
With pearls and diamonds. Earth seemed not
like earth,
Perchance seemed not, because my thoughts were all
With him who had gone from it."
This the end
Of Albert's dream, by the devout and aged man ;
Nor left he aught untold, of that told him,
On the morn Albert expired. This is the end !

It seemed like revelation new ; and lit
With brighter light the mystery of souls
And angels. As a star new launched in space
Casts radiance o'er new passes in the sky,
So would that dream pursue me with its power,
Until I felt its memory ne'er would die,
Unless I dying !
As I went my way,
Nor ever saw them more—before me rose

The scenes : around me seemed the worlds to
breathe
Of that strange pair, of whom, immortal one,
Mortal awhile the other, and in part,
Not wholly : as one on the threshold stands,
Between two worlds, a foot on either side,
Of neither, yet partaking some of both.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

BOOK THIRD.

My native land I visited, when years
Thrice seven had flown o'er earth, as spirits fly
Which leave their memories o'er all their track,
And live forever. Oft on ocean's vast
And trackless path, at midnight hour, when winds
Flew round us, lighting on the shrouds and sails,
Or "took the ruffian billows by their tops,"
And dashed them o'er the shuddering prow, I thought
Of that lone ship in peril, ages past,
To which an angel came, a messenger,
The hope of the ship's crew; 'twixt Crete midway
And rocky Melita, with words of cheer
To Rome's apostle.

Twelve long days and nights,

Since on my homeward voyage I did sail,
Had reckoned up their hours, when dawning morn
Revealed the rocky shores of Erin green,
In dark outline before us. Ere the night
Came from her worlds beyond the sky, with all
Her starry retinue, the northern shores
Of that wild isle, the Mull of dark Kintyre,
The lofty Arran, we had passed, and saw
The glittering archipelago which lies
In Clyde's broad Frith. Dumbarton's storied steep
And castellated rock, against the sky
Loomed up, like some angelic sentinel
Guarding us, as all night we anchored lay
Waiting the break of morn. There was no change
Upon the scenery. The Frith, the isles,
The sky, the clouds, the shores were still the same,
As in the days gone by. The viewless wind
In wantonness caressed me, as of old,
When rapt in thoughts sublime a boy I stood,
At morn and eve, upon those windy steeps
Unaltered.—I, alone, of all things there,
Was changed by Time's rude finger.

Once again
I stood, returned, upon the crowded wharves

Of the great city. No familiar face,
No voice of kinsman, friend, or comrade old,
Was there to greet me. In the grave they slept—
Father and mother; nor could I mine eyes
From tears refrain. I felt as one who stands
Amid the sepulchres of all his race,
Himself the last survivor, all his thoughts
Reflected only to the shadowy past—
But all earth-scenes are fleeting, so the thoughts
That form and vivify the mind within.

Pass we my visit to the scenes of old,
Familiar and beloved; the roof which saw
My birth-hour; the green vales and hills of mist
Dear to my boyhood,—pass the pilgrimage
To my dear parents' grave—that duty dear;
Pass we my steps through places known to fame,
Palace, or prison, consecrated church,
Or castellated keep, or breezy downs,
Where erst embattled armies, face to face
Encountering, shocked, and Scotland wept or sung
Their slaughter, or their glory; Bannockburn
And Bruce's might, or Flodden's fatal field,
Where all the forest flowers were wede away;

These pass we—they are sung by loftier harps,
By hearts with heavenly genius more inflamed ;
But not with patriot love more filled than mine.

At length—nor where, nor how, it needs not tell :
Suffice it that the scene, the place, the time
Fitted the unsought occasion—once again
We met—strange meeting—Isabelle and I ;
Young Isabelle, the wife of him who died
On the far Mississippi, with whose fate
Connection I had held so manifold,
So multiform ; as known to who thus far
The lingering mazes of my devious strain
Have followed patient.

Isabelle was here,
Who o'er the sea had voyaged, to behold
The natal land of him, late gone to Heaven ;
And memories common to us both, and strong
As links of steel, compelled us, each to each
To commune of the past.

We sat us down
Upon a rustic seat, o'erlooking wide
The Firth of Forth, with all its isles and shores,

Its trees, towers, hills, and skimming white-sailed barks.
Then—nor was 't strange, for who with dreams so much
Had busied been—dreams mingling with our lives,
And, it may be, presaging life to come—
We spoke of visions, and she told me this,
Her dream of yesternight:
"In thought I stood
Upon a distant star, the universe
Outspread beneath my vision, clear as day.
I' the centre of his worlds sat the great sun,
And still he filled their emptying urns with years.
He was the torch which lighted them, the fire
Which heated them, the fount from which their sky
Drank all its blue, the earth her green, and all
The flowers their witchery of dies. The stars,
Like showers of glory from some mass
Of nebulous light outshot, through boundless space,
Too populous and emulous of growth—
Arcturus and Orion, and the Seven,
The Pleiades, and the chambers of the south—
Were there, as fresh as when Job saw them shine
Three thousand years ago; and the morning star,

Which rapt Isaiah's harp, by angel's hands
Attuned to immortality, hath given.

While thus I saw the myriad rounded spheres
Run through the universe, like cars of gold,
Methought I felt the presences divine
Of spiritual beings. Then beheld
Hard by two spirits, marvelling as I
To see their glory ; this of earth—of heaven,
Angelic, showed the other.
" Wherefore sail
These stars the Empyrean ? " questioned he
Who less than angel seemed. " Be these the ships
Celestial, on the sea of time afloat
Toward shores eternal ?—or immortal fanes,
Dwellings and tabernacles, for repose
Of angels, on their voyagings divine ?
Whence, whither, and how long ? "
Ere yet reply
Vouchsafed was, a change came o'er the scene :
The stars set instant ; all was night and gloom.
Then, as when morning light relumes the east,
The earth alone I saw. Then as a ship
First on the horizon seen, at early morn

By who from some tall Pharos scans the sea,
Nigh lifts itself, nigh and nigher, and becomes
More palpable, till all its spars and sails,
And smallest rigging show minute and clear.
So did the earth approach, nor long the time
Or ere I marked its rocky shores distinct,
Barring the entrance of its surfy seas :
Its hills, its vales, its rivers, lakes and streams ;
Its quiet hamlets, and its royal towns,
All sleeping in the sun, like cradled babes
Rocked by the mother's hand. I heard the rush
Of cataracts, down leaping from the hills,
Parents of rivers—saw the upland tarns
Lie in their misty mountain homes asleep :
The world was rising from its couch of night,
To pay its orisons to the uprisen sun.

While gazing thus upon the beauteous earth,
More beauteous than it ever seemed before,
Again the scene was shifted, and I saw
An avenue revealed, connecting earth
And heaven. Nor knew I till that dreaming hour
Such avenue there was. Long, broad and steep,
From star to star, through boundless space it rose,

Surpassing all the human mind can frame,
Of vastness or of beauty. Giant trees
Shading its streets ; fountains murmured by
Cooling its precincts. Hierarchies bright
Its pleasant paths innumerable clomb,
Filling its way with glory. The great gate
Wide open stood, and by it stood, in hosts,
Attendant angels, waiting who should come,
In heaven expected, yet delayed on earth.

While wondering at this avenue, and all
The heavenly pomp assembled there, I saw
A human soul, and guardian angel, stand
Before the guarded portals of the gate,
Seeking admittance of th' angelic host,
To that their heavenward pass. Whereat arose
Loud shouts of cherubim and seraphim
To hail their advent. That triumphant joy
Ceased, and a fiery chariot them up took,
And bore them high, that heavenly road along,
In pomp and grandeur, such as ne'er beheld
Mind mortal, nor imagined. Vaster far
That chariot, and more glorious than the blaze
Of the great sun, escorted by all stars,

Made pilgrimage from earth up to the gates
Of Beula. Hosts that avenue along,
Angelic, veiled their crowns and shouted hymns
The while that chariot passed. Methought I heard
The rapturous pæans of innumerous souls
High up the heavenly hills, as they beheld
The entering pageant and the chariot wheels,
Which bore a soul to everlasting bliss.
The noise of trumpets filled the air. The peals
Of the great organ of eternity,
The music of ten thousand holy harps,
The voices of angelic minstrels, swelled
The wondrous diapason. As the pair
Entered the thunderous vestibules of heaven,
A film dropped from my eyes, and instantly
I knew the soul, it was *his* soul, my own
Departed husband's, on its way to God,
By him led forward, who his every step
On earth had known, and lighted all his ways—
His Guardian Angel.

Here again my dream
Was changed; an angel came to me and cried—
"Look, mortal, on the earth once more."

I looked,
And saw the Mississippi covered once again
With the white mists of morn. Upon its banks
Arose the dwelling of my happy youth,
Gathered around it vast angelic hosts.
The chamber of my dying husband came
Before me, and myself embracing him,
Himself no longer. Little thought I then
Angelic eyes pitied my grief.

"A world there is."

The angel spake again to me. Said he:
"A world of God nearer to earth, and filled
With beings ruined, and for ever doomed
To woe!—which seen, will give to understand
God's justice and God's mercy, and to judge
The insane blindness of the fools who rush
Heedless of what He promises, to grasp
Empty fruition of the lusts which war
Against the soul, and for the joys of time
Barter immortal bliss and glorious life
Among the seraphim; preferring wrath,
And wailing in the abyss, and gnashing teeth,
Delivered to the worm that dieth not."

His hand he waved, and lo ! before me stood
The star-light Hell ! Like exhalation dire,
It rose and stood before me, looming up.
Dread, horrible, infernal ! most unlike
All save itself, of worlds. No hills it had
Nor mountain range, nor sea, nor glassy lake,
Nor murmuring rivulets, nor forests old.
No breath of evening zephyrs, or soft airs,
No winds. No sun it had, nor silver moon,
No gentle stars i' the empyrean sky.
No city, citadel, or tower, or wall :
No fairy palaces, nor grove, nor lawn.
No white-sailed ships on seas, no shallops frail
Of fairy form, on winding rivers hid,
Away in mountain fastnesses. No haunts
To be revisited, no travellers young
Or old, upon its coasts, come from far lands
To muse. There were no green, historic scenes
To see and love. Like cities in our dreams,
Deserted of all traffic, so was it
Without one mart of business, or exchange
Within, for all the merchants of a world
To congregate. No science and no art
Saw I therein. No harp, no statuary,

No portraiture of things most fair, beheld
In other worlds of God. No Sabbath day
Came there, no Mercy-seat, where weary souls
Worn out could kneel. No sanctuary where praise
And prayer, and truth eterne, and sacraments
Delight the entranced worshipper. None was
Who prayed or praised, in all that world, not one!
Nor book, nor scripture soothed, nor armed the soul
With gems of human genius, truths divine.
Greetings were none, though aged forms I saw,
And youthful forms in human beauty clad.
No home was there, no moonlight trysting tree:
No smiles of youthful love! no glances sweet
And soft at meetings, as on earth; nor looks
Of hope, nor tears of joy, nor reveries
Of blessedness.

How long I gazing stood
I know not, ne'er can know, but long enough
To show me that there came no days, no weeks,
No months, no years, no time, in that dread place.
Cycles on cycles ceaseless rolled, unknown
Around the beach of that forgotten star,
For all forgot it seemed of God, so drear
It was; and full of everlasting woe!

Like monuments of agony and death,
I saw the ruined angels stand, their crowns
All smouldering with slow, eternal fires,
Watching the billows burning, of that flood
Which ever dashed against the battlements
Of that lone star, like seared and scorched pines,
Erewhile beheld, upon earth's mountain-tops
By forest conflagration fired, they stood.
Far off, in the interior, saw I more,
And beyond, the agonies untold,
The blackened forms of beings wailing there
In utter desolation. Memory
And thought alone were left them. Nor in all,
Far as my eye could scan, was aught which showed
The sacred, sweet relationships of earth,
Of husband, spouse, of parent, child. No love
Of brother, sister, lover, friend. It was
A world wherein to dwell, the passing thought
Appalled the loaded fancy with all forms
Of hideousness and horror. Yet its gates
Wide open stood, and thronged with those who come,
Blind to its terrors, down the slanting way,
Betrayed and lost. Most horrible it was,

Nor can I now, without hot flow of tears
Describe it, and the hopeless dwellers there,
Did not the angel words high elevate
My thoughts, to leave all fears of it behind.

Fast as it had arisen it passed away.
His hand the angel moved, and it was gone.
This, too, he said : " Thy husband never saw
That ruined world and its inhabitants.
It is not near the avenue to bliss,
But far below the earth on its confines ;
And far enough from every other world
To hide all knowledge of its agony
Within its own dire battlements of woe !

As when we pass from sights most desolate
On earth, to scenes of loveliness and joy
And blessedness supreme ; so in my dream
The star of woe and horror floated by,
And sights of bliss came o'er the changed scene.
The glorious road between the earth and sky,
Like rainbow of surpassing pomp and size ;
And all along its arch, the chariot wheels
Of angels and transfigured souls rolled on,

As if an envoy of great import. Bright
The vestibules of heaven shone out, and all
Its walls and towers. Rejoicings full and grand
Enchoired with angel trump and harp and song,
Resounded from within the battlements
Of bliss, as if a nation of the earth
From tyranny set free.

Anon methought
I stood within the gates, upon a tower
Surpassing all earth's towers for altitude,
Which amplest prospect gave ; and saw the mount
Of God, set in the vale of heaven, begirt
With the glittering, glorious, crystal, waveless sea.
High on its top the Mediatorial Throne,
Whiter than light, stood up, and overlooked
The universe. Steps rose to it on steps,
Lit with seven mystic burning lamps. It stood,
The centre of all sovereignty in heaven.

One with the likeness of a man sat there :
Upon his head were many crowns, and all
I knew, but chiefest knew, the coronet
Of mercy ; brightest was its sheen. Threefold—

Of the prophets, priests and kings combined. The bow
Of sovereign grace suspended, hung o'erhead,
Spanning the throne triumphal—arch it hung
Majestical, sublime. On one side blazed
These words terrific : "A consuming fire
Is our God"—on the other, writ alike
In everlasting flame—"Our God is love."
From underneath the throne a river flowed
Of crystal, round the mount and in the sea,
The everlasting sea, discharged its flood—
The river which the psalmist saith "makes glad
For aye, the city of our God."
How long
On the white throne, and Him who sat on it,
I gazed, there was no horologe to tell.
But ne'er shall I forget the mystery
Of God in Christ, then oped to me. Then thoughts
Before me passed, so luminous and grand ;
That I must be an angel and ascend
The heights of the invisible, and put on
The spirit state to give them glory enough
In utterance.
Anon, another view

Of God's high mount was shown to me. I thought
I saw it covered with transfigured souls,
An angel host. If all the trees of earth's
Vast forests came ; if all earth's buried dead
Came forth ; if all the silver stars create,
Together stood, all o'er the mountain ridge,
Amid the valley of Eternity,
'Twould be to that great congregation less
Than shell or pebble on the spreading strand
To all the worlds compared, which God first made,
What time he brooded over chaos dark
And shapeless.
O'er that congregation reigned
Silence profound, mysterious, deep and dread.
I heard no harp of angel, or of soul ;
No wing of seraphim cleave the air, in haste
Returning or departing. Speechless stood
All these, as if in awful worship wrapt
Adoring mercy. While I sought to know
The cause of such assemblage round the throne,
And turned to ask mine angel—" Hold," he said ;
" Look to the steps of the white throne."
I looked,
And instantly I saw my husband's soul

With his attendant angel, coming forth
From judgment. Never can I cease to see,
While memory lives, his mien, his gait, his air.
Diviner and more Godlike he appeared
Than when I saw him travelling up to bliss
In the angelic chariot, on the road
So glorious. Like a minstrel king he came,
A crown upon his head, and in his hand
A harp. I heard his voice of music chant
A strain, surpassing all earth canticles
In pathos and sublimity. His steps
I saw by angels tended—ministries
Ordained of God, angelic people they,
And older than the living sun or stars;
Yet young and beautiful with holiness.
Innumerous souls I saw approaching him
On every side, to welcome, and to hail
His coming. Some I saw distinct and clear.
Their faces oft had passed me in the ways
Of earth; and not a few, the likeness bare
Of beings I had known, but long since fled
From Time's grave-trenched coasts. They had the air
Of mortals, and the countenance; for souls

Retain the outlines of their body, all
Transfigured and ennobled. Then I saw
Before the mount of judgment, where he walked,
A vast infinitude of scenery spread,
The scenery of the great domain of heaven.
It seemed a land of natural terraces :
Of green-capped hills, of winding lakes, where ran
Meandering streams : of trees umbrageous, tall
And beautiful, as the fair tree of life
In Eden. Waterfalls were there, and crystal lakes,
And forests, such as earth ne'er owned e'en when
All young, and new create ; and fairy nooks
Inviting souls and angels in ; and bowers
Of peaceful, living, endless, holy bliss.
I saw no grave mound rise in it, nor heard
The wail of orphanage or widowhood.
Where'er I looked, the robe of holiness
Lay over it like a glory spread across
The face of beauty. All was blessedness.
Its music made me strong. The air, the light,
The sounds, the people, and the place, bespoke
The holy citadel, and garden of God.
I knew the while I dreamed, and dreaming saw
Not heaven itself, but the symbolic views

Of heaven, befitting the earthborn dreamer. Here
A change came o'er me, and again the scene
Was changed.
I heard the Guardian Angel speak
To my Lord's soul ; and saw his finger point
On to the Orient. Instant at the sign
They both spread out their ample wings and soared
The empyrean. On they sailed like barks
Upon a summer sea. I too was borne
Away, and followed them. The angel form
Who guided me went too, nor word the while
Spake he. At last I saw them both alight
Upon a lofty mountain-top. At first,
Methought a veil of mist its summit hid ;
But as I looked, I saw its cliffs distinct.
'Twas granted me to reach another peak
Short space from that, whereon his soul
Went up to the o'erlooking heights, which rose
Tower-like, amid a boundless plain. The heights
The Guardian Angel first ascended, both
Stood there, like travellers, to mine eyes, gone up
For observation wide.
There was a tree,
A solitary tree upon the top :

Such tree could find no soil on earth to give
It nutriment, and roots far reaching. Tall,
Umbrageous, laded full with fruit divine.
Two vacant thrones stood underneath its boughs,
There sat they down, my husband's glorious soul,
And his attendant Guardian Angel. Both
Like sovereign kings appeared, who took survey
Of some vast empire which conjoint they ruled ;
And now from noontide travel sat them down
For calm repose, yet took not off their crowns
Of glory.

The long rays which kissed the place,
And all the scenes outspread below were bright,
Brighter than all light else, beheld erewhile.
My ministering angel whispering, said :
"That is prophetic light, which showed the seers
Of olden time, remote futurity."
From off the battlements on which I stood,
I saw distinct two vast mysterious seas,
On which my husband looked. The angel turned
His eyes and thoughts to them. To the Orient, one—
The other toward the Occident, was spread
Boundless. Upon the Orient strand I saw

The aged Past walk sorrowful, and old.
As thick as hulks of stranded argosies
On earth's black rocks, lay worn-out empires, rent
And desolate. Among the drifting rack
Floated the blighted hopes and schemes of Time.
No more I saw of that. But turning, saw
The ocean of the Future, and beyond,
The tops of distant ages from afar,
Like full-rigged ships come up. Along the shores
Shone lights, most faint the farthest, but all bright,
All moving onward. In the future skies
Shone moons and stars, awaiting destinies
Unknown to me.

Far out into the waves
Of that futurity, before mine eyes,
A promontory of the mountain, rose
That cape far-reaching. Next the royal pair
Seemed to discourse. Upon its jutting ridge
Myriads of shapes angelic they beheld.
Their eyes were turned from looking far away
Into the distant future, for events
Foretold them on the first blest Sabbath night
Of time, whereon first was revealed to them
God s scheme of mercy. Leave they asked, that night,

To look into the mystery sublime,
And mark the sign of its approach. Nor once
Had they that post deserted, spying thence
The wondrous secret of Eternity:
And well had it repaired their large desire.

As one who travels oft in dreamland knows—
I had another vision.

In the air
Methought I sailed, like a young star of hope.
Beside me sailed my angel. It was day,
A summer day most beautiful to see.
Below me lay an island in the sea
Of crystal girdled. Circular it lay,
Pyramidal in height, and terraced all,
From base to summit. Traversed everywhere,
By avenues of beauty. Trees superb,
Of every form, and flowers of fairest hue
Garnished its shores. Its waterfalls and rills;
Its glens, its arched chasms and battlements,
Seemed all ethereal. Music too, was there,
And minstrelsy o' sweetness, softer than
That heard upon the mount of God. It came
Up in mine ears, like the seraphic tones

Of pilgrim spirit, sitting at the close
Of day upon the forest edge, who breathes
Upon his flute a roundelay of love.
This islet in the crystal sea, this isle
Of infants, marvellous gathering had of souls,
Of infant spirits, innumerous, and past
All numbers, brought together on the earth.
I saw some sitting on the jutting rocks,
Contemplating the waterfalls : some up
The grassy slopes ascending ; some beneath
The palms and cedars lying, in converse
Divine : some sang the odes and songs of bliss :
Some thrilled their strings of gold—no sorrow there !
No tear-drop fell ! no word of strife ! no look
Of fear ! no wish unsatisfied was there !
For every wish was holy. Each young soul
Its Guardian Angel had. Immortal, too,
Were they :—nor death, nor grave, nor sin came nigh.
Great jubilee it was, of infant souls
Assembled there. While gazing thus, I hung
In air. It seemed as if I floated near
The top of this all-beauteous isle, and saw
My husband and his angel standing there.

Such narrative stirred to its secret depths
My memories of Anna, Mary, James—
The lilies God had called of late, from those,
The flowers of love, which in my garden grew.
Then questioned I, if in that isle o' the sea,
My treasures lost, yet not lost quite, since Hope
Whispered reunion, she beheld.

"Them there
I saw," she answered, "all the three: I saw
Them, side by side, upon the topmost hill,
O'erlooking all the isle; and, them beside,
Their Guardian Angels, sleepless vigil keeping.
I had no power to speak, nor they to hear,
If I had spoken. In their eyes, agaze
On spiritual glory, earthly sights
Wake no emotions:—nor 'tis ours to know
The secrets of Eternity, forbid
To mortal comprehension—only this
I saw, that *there* they were, and in that state
Serenely happy, as God's angels are."

The dream went onward, like a mountain rill
Which leaps o'er cataracts; now by the pool
Beneath a moment lingers, wheeling then

Around some jutting rock, its current hides
In subterranean channels, but anon,
Emerges in the green and spreading plain—
Nor stops again till it beholds the sea,
And goes with it, made one, around the shores
Of earth. Me onward thus, my wondrous dream,
Through heaven, led devious, till, in thought I stood
Upon another mountain. Altitude
On altitude, most high, before me rose
In one vast semiarch. The conelike heights
Were beautiful exceedingly, and white
With glory. Alpine travellers often catch
Such view, through gorges in the frozen top
Of mountains, which o'erlook the wide champaign.
On every pinnacle stood human souls,
Surveying the Empyrean, through the glass
Of God.

While gazing thus on spectacle
So grand, my angel whispered in mine ear—
"That is the Synod of God's seers, who saw
Erewhile the future, and its mysteries,
Oped to the less inspired, who never stood
Upon the mount of Vision. Year by year,
They seek these mountain fastnesses, to spy

The advent of their prophecies."

At this

My memory recalled their utterances
Divine and marvellous. I scarce refrained
From chanting their inspired canticles.
O! past all limning was this glorious dream
Of the earth-seers. High up the highest peak
Of the great central height, I saw distinct
What seemed the mystic ladder, which was seen
Of olden time, with hierarchies all white,
Ascending and descending.

As the dream

Shifted and changed, I saw upon the vale,
Contemplating the vision grand, the soul
Of my dear lord, and his attendant guide.
The angel held converse with him the while,
And oft his right hand lifted, as to point
Some chiefest of the watchers, but no word
Fell on my listening ear.

Next came this scene,

Before my dreaming mind. I seemed to stand
Upon the battlements of a bright star,
That floated in the firmament serene,
Whence I could see the whole circumference

Of central heaven. Like some city vast,
Crowded and populous, angelic forms,
And souls of earth, innumerous, I saw:
Nor ever saw such blessedness before.
The vast assemblage was, by tidings stirred,
Replete with joy divine: as when the trees
Of a great forest shake their weighty boughs,
And bow their lofty tops, when winds let loose
Fleet over them,—so moved their multitude.
Some stood in groups conversing, some aloof
In bowers sat, half withdrawn, and waked their harps
To sweetest harmonies; with outspread wings,
Some swept the Empyrean, fleet as thought,
Heaven's messengers. That was no common joy,
No calm and tranquil bliss, whose witchery
Is felt on earth, when lovers meet in bowers;
But ecstasies celestial and extreme,
As when a sire embraces his lost son
Returned from error's gloomy wilderness;
Or maiden fair, her lover, exiled long
From youthful haunts come back, with laurel green
Of fame around his forehead. Greater e'en
Than these, and more triumphant, rapturous,

And full of inspiration, was the joy
Of angels, seraphs, principalities,
And powers, and souls rejoicing. Fountains rose
Of blessedness o'er all the plain of heaven.
It seemed the everlasting and abundant urn
Of God, set up ere angels were create,
I' the dawning of the past eternity,
Had new o'erflowings.

While I silent gazed
On this celestial jubilee, the cause
Unable to divine, these words I heard
Proclaimed—"The lost is found. The lost is found.
The lost is found." The angels standing near
The stream of life cried out: the human souls
On every mountain-top, and valley green
Of bliss, took up the joyful cry: the winds
From every quarter of the heavens flew forth,
And audibly pronounced the words—"The lost
Is found." The angels floating in the midst
Of the Empyrean shouted louder still
The words. The echoes of Eternity
Replied—"The lost is found." Methought I heard
The voices of the angels on the earth
Calling aloud up to the heaven of heavens—

"The lost is found."

While wondering at this scene
And holy tumult, soft mine angel spoke
To me, and said: "Thy native earth-world gives
This joy to heaven. Look down to the earth-scene
Which moveth the celestial dignities,
And holy ones, translated."

Instantly,
Earth came and stood before me. It was night
Upon the coasts of earth, the noon of night—
The silver moonlight showed a quiet vale
Afar, amid the forest solitude.
A babbling, noisy little brook ran there,
Glittering beneath the moonlight clear. Just where
The rivulet emerged from a ravine,
By tall trees hidden, stood a cottage lone,
With wild vines twined around it, ruinous
And old. Faint through its crevices I saw
One taper's sickly glimmer.

Suddenly
A light more dazzling and more beautiful
Than moonbeams, flooded this earth-scene, and straight
The dazzling forms of mighty angels stood

Around the cottage walls. Intensely clear
Their waiting chariots shone. No mortal form
Was visible in all that solemn place,
Fitted to be the vestibule divine
Of inner heaven, so glorious was it made
By those bright guests.

Another change o'er passed—
I stood within the cottage door ; nor there
Alone, for angels also were within,
Ministering to an aged man, who lay
Upon a bed of leaves a-dying—old,
With worn and wrinkled brow, and scalp all bare.
No mortal watched his couch of death : alone
He lay, not seeing, hearing not, that concourse bright
Which made his solitude a crowded court.
He prayed, and through my soul his words of prayer
Passed like an arrow, cleaving the blue air,
Instinct, and piercing with divinest hope
And faith.

This much I learned from his converse
With God : that in his youth he strayed diverse
From Virtue's peaceful, holy way, serene ;
Spurning the fragrant blossoms which were there,

On every tree and flower. Like one borne on
Through deserts desolate and devious : dark
And pleasureless, he wandered on and on
In sin. From beetling precipices fell
To deeper gulfs. Nor stopped he once to think,
To list for warning voices from without,
Or for that one within. Nor paused he e'en
When the Death Angel took his holy sire
And mother from the earth : nor when gray hairs
And vision dim warned him of coming age.
His supplication shook his shrivelled form,
Like lonely tree upon a mountain-top,
By wintry wind assailed. His penitence
So thrilled me, that from weeping held I not.
Meanwhile the angels moved not, who were there,
But listed to his prayer, as witnesses
From God.

A change came o'er the scene. Methought
I was translated back again to bliss,
When I could hear distinct, and feel the joy
Of the rejoicers. As we flew to heaven,
Mine angel talked with me, as friend with friend,
And said : " God's mercy found the aged man,
As he stood toppling on the precipice

Of time, o'erchanging hell ; and like a ship
Safe moored in quiet bay, where no storms rage,
Now finds he anchorage in the clear sea
Of God's electing love, no more to drift
Amid the breakers of a sinful life ; and hence
These songs, and grand rejoicings, filled the bounds
Of heaven, what time the herald angels came
With news of his repentance, fresh from earth."

Nor more I heard, for I espied the soul
Of him I loved, and his tall angel stand
Amid the dream, contemplating the scene
Of this repenting sinner.
Suddenly
I was borne on, my angel with me flew.
The region which I passed was like a land
Where mists obscure and change the scenery.
We lighted in a valley 'mid the hills,
Gorgeous with manifold flowers, unlike the blooms
Of earth, and verdurous with unearthly greens,
And cooled with liquid lapse of rivers clear,
Such as man's eye ne'er saw, since were shut out
The four immortal floods of Paradise.
That ever present pair were present still.

And here mine angel said : " The vale behold
Of thoughts and fancies. Thoughts are these trees all,
Thoughts all these flowers. Ideas grow for aye,
In this enchanted place."
I answered him,
And said : " I know that God sowed all the thoughts
Of all his worlds ; but never dreamed of place
Where fancies grow like flowers, and trees of earth,
And thoughts flow like earth's rivers, but more bright
As from diviner founts, themselves divine,
With mirrored gleams of ever-living bliss."

At this, he put into my hand of flesh
A cluster of these thoughts, which he had plucked
From the umbrageous tree, whose branches fair
Spread overhead, and bade me taste.
'Twas sweet
To taste, and instantly I felt my mind
Uprise, far-sighted, as the eagle borne
Amid the Empyrean. Earth was gone,
And all things earthly. Bodiless, all soul,

I seemed to hang in highest pride of place,
Where every thing was seen, and known, and felt.
I saw the secrets of the universe
Lie open. I saw the planets ride the fields
Of space, like charioteers, or white-winged ships
Earth's oceans sailing. First like myriad sparks
They rode the firmament ; but as I gazed,
I knew them for the suns and stars of space
Which I had often seen, in the night skies
Of earth, diminished to my human ken
By distance, now revealed distinct and broad
In their true lustre and colossal size.
But still from these it came not, the great light
Which flooded all, as from one central source,
With living glory. Not the glory of the sun,
Or moon, or planet, which have each their own
Particular effulgence, but unknown
From whence it came, mystic, and full of awe.
Gazing on these, high o'er the horizon's rim,
Methought a huge gigantic wheel arose,
Instinct with eyes, whence flowed that light sublime,
Which saw at once all corners of all space,
Naught hidden from their world-pervading ken.
Slowly it rolled towards me through the fields

Of space. Spoke after spoke I saw arise
And then descend. Epochs and eras hung
With great events ; and in its track behind
The destinies of all the worlds of God.

Brighter it shone, and brighter, as it neared ;
So that I saw the dread futurities
Of all created things, revolving grow
On every revolution, thick as leaves
Upon the trees of earth. There was no world
In all the universe, whose destiny
Its vast gyrations did not roll along,
As on and on it rolled, with angel throngs
Around it ministering. Mine eyes observed,
What till that moment unobserved was,
A mighty spirit in the centre stand,
Who gave it motion—motion evermore !

I knew the wheel of Providence, which ne'er
Had stood an instant still since endless space,
Endless eternity, and God alone
Had being—nor would stop for evermore :
Nor turn aside, nor backward, but sweep on
Ever and ever, by the will propelled

Of Him who ordered it, in shape displayed
Of spiritual guide its course to rule,
Subordinate to that eternal scheme
Predestinate of Mercy, that all worlds
Should know its triumphs, and confess the plan
Of Justice made complete, but quenched in Grace!

Voices now fell upon my ear. "Whence came
These words?" I asked mine angel.
He replied:
"That is the martyr cry, heard at this hour
Each day before the throne. The martyred souls
Appear, an awful multitude, each eve
Before the veiled mountain of the Lord,
When the white throne offers access to all,
And cry—'How long, O Lord?—How long, O
Lord?—
How long, O Lord? till vengeance girdeth on
His sword, and goeth down to vindicate
Our wrongs on earth?' When silence hath ensued,
No voice replying to them from the throne,
They take departure to their ministries
Remote, and come again at the set hour
Ordained for their renewing aye their cry.

If thou couldst listen here to-morrow eve
Again, thine ear would catch their martyr cry."

The voice had ceased ; and as they silent stood
Awaiting answer from the throne, the dream
Showed me a mountain rise grand as the Alps,
And like them too, with turrets high, all filled
With martyrs. Vast they seemed as army, past
Enumeration. Beautiful their robes
And coronets gleamed out. As rapt I stood
Beholding them, my angel said : "Anon
Thou wilt converse with them, and know each one."
Then lifting up his hand, he pointed out
The British martyrs, as one only could
Who with them was in fellowship conjoined.
He showed me those of Bladenock ; then those
Of Ayrsmoss, Pentland Hills, Lochgoin,
Of Galloway, of Glasgow, Irvine, Ayr,
Of Edinburgh, Saint Andrews.

Nor heard I,
Nor saw more of them, for even then, aloft,
Upon the highest pinnacles of all,
Above that semicirque of towering hills,
I saw my husband and his angel stand.

Like scenes in some earth-drama, so my dream
Changed ever. How the soul can pass from place
To place remote, in dreams, the mind of man
Hath not to know. But now, methought I walked
Amid the Paradise of angels, where
My guide led me. The scenery divine
Surpassed the Paradise of souls. Perchance
I only saw the suburbs of the land,
Where ransomed spirits from the earth abide.
All over it triumphal arches rose,
Colossal, sculptured, white, most beautiful
To see. The everlasting trees were there,
Erect, umbrageous, high ; and underneath
Their branches groups of angels stood, and traced
The mysteries inscribed on the arches grand.
I saw the tree of life, but I forgot
To taste its fruit—oh strange forgetfulness !
For I could then have passed secure alway
At pleasure, through the Vale of Death, to see
The disembodied, whom I love.
There were
No broken columns there, no torches wrought
On pyramid or obelisk : no urns
To tell of ashes there enclosed, once shrines

Of human souls. There was no type of death
In all the place.
But now, mine angel guide
Paused suddenly, and said: "Behold yon arch,
Erect to the creation; angels all
Affirm they found it standing there, what time
New made, they entered hither, while God's word
By which they were create, first in their ears
Resounded. Over it was carved distinct
The universe; but ere I took in all
Its beauty and design, it passed away;
Or I passed from it, and another rose,
Of structure more sublime, mine eyes before—
The grand memorial of the Mercy scheme.
Columns on columns rose, immense its span,
And vast the avenue it overhung,
Through which God's chariots all abreast might drive;
And all the souls of man create, or yet
To be created. Nor alone it stood,
Nor far aloof from it its sister arc
Rose, beautiful with carven hieroglyphs
Forewrought: around it myriads of bright souls
Hung joyful.

This, the angel said, "I saw
Arise, what time the primal Sabbath day
Was ended. All the unnumbered angels
To build it up. 'Tis dedicate by God
To earth's own Sabbath-day."

As feather borne
Upon the air, so easily I moved
From scene to scene. Methought the angels all,
Who travelled there, saw me with eyne surprised,
For all were spirits, saving only I;
And each saluted me with reverence
Profound and fitting.

Suddenly again
Mine angel paused, and thus outspoke he clear,
Pointing an amaranth ensculptured group
Of figures, resting on a pedestal
High o'er my head. Recent, the scene portrayed,
In this surpassing statuary. He said:
"Full many scenes has earth like this, but heaven
This only, nor this even, save that here
Admiring angels wrought it from the life,
And set it up in Paradise, ablaze
With adamant and topaz."

At the sight,

My heart was stirred to its profoundest deeps.
A sculptured group it was, larger than life—
A weary mother on her couch of straw,
Worn out with ill-paid toil, asleep—with toil,
Painfully borne, to win her children bread ;
But ministering angels hovered near,
Protecting them, while innocently slept
The babes around that sad parent.

Next, I stood
Before the arc, erect to prayer. These words
Engraved on it—" Prayer brings the human soul
Into God's house of banqueting, and opes
His treasures unto it."

Mine angel said :
" Man needeth prayer to perfect every grace,
To sanctify afflictions, teachings, joys :
Faith is its hand :—all men at death can pray.
A sigh—a tear—a look—a thought—a word—
Is prayer."

While yet he spoke, I felt myself
Moving in silence up the avenue,
So rich in trophies of aërial art.
Again we paused, for here uprose the arc
Triumphal, dedicate to holy love.

No structure ever was erect on earth
So passing fair.
Three rounded vaults uprose,
On columns high as heaven, all sculptured o'er
With God's decrees. The angels builded it,
What time the scheme of mercy was made known
To them, and writ God's mystic sentences
Thereon, that coming ages might behold
His loving kindness unto men.
These words—
"Love is the eldest attribute o' God,"
Alone I read, for mine angelic guide
Addressed me, "'Mid the farthest ancient years,
The everlasting cycles which had rolled
Before creation was, Jehovah loved
Thy race. Love was the password given to us,
The angel family, when we audience sought
Before the throne, that memorable hour
We put on being."
Only one sight more
I saw in that angelic Paradise:
The semblance of what had been, if on earth
By human builders reared, of cedarn beams,
And alabaster buttress, coigne and spire;

But here of immaterial splendors, glories far
Surpassing Grecian art, compact and tack:
A vast cathedral, where all earth might come
To worship. Worshippers I saw not there,
Yet myriads of bright beings walked its isles,
Or stood upon its towers, or waiting near,
Gazed on its marvellous supernatural size,
Its beauty and completeness.

"What is here,
O angel!" I inquired.

He answering, said:
"The antitypal structure it is, forebuilt
To the great work of truth—the Bible. There
All nations of the earth may congregate
To worship God, emblem divine and fit.
The Bible offereth all the families
Of man the grand redemption scheme. Oft here
Thy disembodied soul anon will come,
And ever find new mysteries set forth
Herein."

Nor more I heard, for I was borne
Away to the encircling battlements
Of bliss. As o'er the parapets I leaned
Earthward, I saw angelic chariots ride

The mighty Empyrean. Thick as fleets
Of argosies on summer seas they rode :
Triumphantly the grand procession moved,
With pomp of banners, trumpet-clang, and shouts
Of myriads, who celestial welcome gave
To those who upward soared, enrobed in light.

"These," cried my spirit guide—"these are the souls
Elect, and the bonds redeemed of sin
Upcoming from the earth, their mission there
Completed, and their weary race all run,
As warriors from the battle-field of time,
Victorious and triumphant. Angels lead
The way. God sends such retinues divine,
To earth for holy souls, whene'er their lease
Of years expires. No infant ever leaps
From off the battlements of time, across
The gulf of death, to these immortal coasts
Of grand Eternity, unaided, lone :
Angelic chariots bear them o'er, and aye
They meet aërial couriers on the way
To bliss, who welcome them, and join the throng
Of the attendant hosts for them sent down,

Cheering them still with minstrelsy divine,
And hymns celestial."
At the word he paused—
I looked, and saw my husband's spirit nigh,
With that angelic presence at his side
Approaching me. As soft his winning smile,
And full and fond his darkly swimming eye,
As tender his persuasive accents fell,
Piercing my heart, as erst, when on the shores
Of that old father of the southern floods,
In buoyant youth and ecstasy divine,
Of that strong passion which makes earth seem heaven,
We strayed, affianced.
Deep it pierced my heart,
That murmured voice, whose every tone was love,
Yet inarticulate of mortal words,
And thrilling the perception of the soul,
With silent utterances understood,
But all unspoken. As the electric sense
Of things forgotten long, which flash at once
At striking of some casual chord, unknown,
And unconnected with the thought it makes
Upon the muser's spirit—so, it seemed,

His accents smote my heart, and told me all,
All I had longed, had prayed, had striven to know
Since he departed, though no human words
Spoke to mine ear. They told me that—TRUE LOVE
On earth is love in heaven—as Truth in time,
E'en in eternity, be only truth.
That as the soul survives, and bears aloft
With the self-soul, self-consciousness—for else
Reward and Pain were neither Penalty
Nor Recompense, but states of woe or bliss,
Casual, and independent of all else,
Foreign or future—so must needs survive,
And mount with it, aloft, that which it had,
While working out its problem here below
Of best, of purest, and of least terrene,
Its clear affections and its hallowed loves,
Permitted.

Then it seemed, around me grew
In clear embrace, his pinions of broad light,
Pressing me to his heart, whose every throb
I counted, by its audible beat, and felt,
In the pulsating rush of soul to soul,
Too strong for poor humanity to bear.

Yet, in ecstasy of bliss me seemed,
Fearing his sure departure—for I felt
His spirit presence melting from my arms,
As snow-wreaths in soft thaw-time. I cried out :
" Give me, beloved, give me, ere we part,
Again to meet, before the natural time
And consummation of this earthly life
Shall make me, too, as thou immortal art,
Give me the unspoken word, which spoken once
Unlocks the barriers of the spiritual world,
And lifts the mortal for a moment up
With immortality commune to hold."

Strange was his aspect as the words I spoke,
Perchance too daring—as the full-orbed moon
When misty vapors wavering o'er its face
Obstruct its clear effulgence, and distort
Its blessed influence, terrifying realms
And purple tyrants, on their trembling thrones,
With supernatural fear, portentous awe.
But soon the gloom o'erpassed, and his own smile
Kindled his face, and kissed his parting lips,
As bending o'er me, nearer than before,
He made as he would speak.

Oh that he had !
But in that rapture, all too great to bear,
In that anticipation of the boon
Never to mortal given, save, who saw
The things apocalyptic ; and who rose
Mortal, among the chariots and steeds
Of Israel—I started—I awoke !
My friend, it was a dream ; and all I saw,
I heard, was nothing, save the linked maze
Of sleep-engendered fantasies.
" Not so ! "
I cried, " not so ! For who shall tell what He
Hath left untold, or that *unreal*, judge,
Which may, alone, be *real* :—that a dream
Which seems all fact to us ; and what we hold
Mere fancy, truth substantial ? Here we pause
By our own imperfection cut short off
From comprehension of his ways sublime,
In which alone he walketh. Only this—
That every thing which is of Him is good ;
And that, of all the things which are, nothing
Hath been without Him, or can be."
Naught else
Was spoken ; but adown the road we went

With thoughts, it may be, not removed far
From such as swelled the deep and speechless souls
Of the disciples, going down the mount
Of the Transfiguration ; musing, half
In awe, in rapture half, the Great To Be,
Hereafter, and the future state of man.

ENVOY.

My lay must needs end here.
A page is writ,
And but a single page of a vast tome,
Whence pages of more profit shall be read,
More worthy of the holy harp of time !
O ! that some poet should arise on earth
Commissioned to indite the Gospel theme
In numbers, and to woo the erring ear
Of sinful man, from the bewitching strains
And melody of harps unsanctified.
Messiah's reign is all unsung—unsung
His yielding up the Mediatorial Throne
To the Father ; and his intercession done !
But all too great for uninspired bards
Such theme, if even Milton's lyre of gold

Should wake to hymn it from the timeless sleep
Of ages ; and unfit the field for mortal feet
Of earth's best earthly minstrels.

But now, here,
My canticle is ended. It may be
The earth-flowers I have gathered, through long years,
Might earlier have perished, but for this
Mine effort to embalm their sweets in verse.
Would that the verse had worthier been ; the bard
More fitted to the theme ; and yet, perchance,
This may take root and live awhile on earth.
And so, farewell, my harp, and farewell ye
Who list my humble strains. And may the lay
Not perish profitless, but, green and strong,
Grow like the tree of life in Paradise,
And offer shade and fruit of living thought
To many a weary earthborn traveller,
When the poor hand which wrote it shall be dust.

THE END.

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